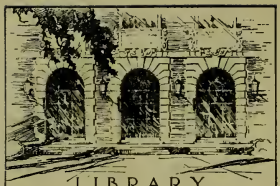

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TOPSAIL-SHEET BLOCKS.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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TOPSAIL-SHEET BLOCKS;

OR,

THE NAVAL FOUNDLING.

BY "THE OLD SAILOR:"

AUTHOR OF

"TOUGH YARNS;" "NIGHTS AT SEA;" "GREENWICH HOSPITAL;"

&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1838.

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TO

WILLIAM JERDAN, ESQ.

EDITOR OF THE LITERARY GAZETTE,

WHO FIRST EXTENDED THE FOSTERING HAND OF

ENCOURAGEMENT TO HIS LITERARY LABOURS,

THESE VOLUMES

ARE GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE OLD SAILOR.

PREFACE.

My first launch was a single volume; I then tried a two-decker; and now I have boldly commissioned a first-rate, with three tiers of artillery. I make up my mind to some random shots, and perhaps a rattling broadside; but I have nailed my colours to the mast, and will never strike. As for sinking me—it must be precious heavy metal to do that; so that I hope to carry my flag triumphantly into the port of public favour, that has given me snug moorings heretofore. Now, for a Preface, I say this is "short and sweet."

The Old Sailor.

TOPSAIL-SHEET BLOCKS.

CHAPTER I.

"I am the dependent on your bounty, no less than the child of your care. I owe you much—much in duty, but still more in affection. 'Twas you who held out to me the sheltering, protecting arm of a parent in the first desolate hour of my childhood's sorrow."

"Thou art fatherless, and therefore I would give you counsel; motherless, and being so, I would fain keep such a vigilant eye above you, that you should not need a mother's watchfulness—her love—her care."

Miss E. L. Montagu.

"Give way cheerily, my lads! here 's a rough night coming on, and the tide 'll be setting in strong flood directly. One half-hour's bold stretch-out with the tail of the ebb will save a dog-watch of hard pulling against the current! Who the devil's that catching crabs?"

"It's Jem here, and he 's almost carried

away the upright of my back," was the response.

"I tell you what it is, Jem," said the first speaker rather sternly, "you've been coming it too strong, I'm thinking. I loves a taste of the stuff myself; but d— it, I say, it's too bad to be sucking the monkey all weathers, particularly when a fellow's on duty."

"I arn't in the least tosticated," hiccuped Jem, once more catching his oar in the water; "but I'm bless'd if this here paddle knows what it's about: the chap as sarved it out from the dock-yard shoved it in among the capstan-bars."

"I know better than that, Jem," returned the other; "the barge's oars are as good as ever were turned out of hand, seeing as I picked them myself. But there's a lump o' grogginess at one end o' yours that I'll allow ud be just as well away."

"S'pose I am a little slued," responded Jem, scarcely able to keep his seat, "I arn't a bit the more drunk for that! It's the wind in my stomach as blows me out, and makes me roll like an East Ingeeman running down a trade."

"You'll be getting blow'd up as well as blow'd out afore long," said the first. "There

you go again — another crab, and be d— to you !"

"There you 're out in your reck'ning, shipmate !" exclaimed Jem, more assured, "and it 's a proof, if so be as proof was wanting, that I am quite sober. It 's Jack Moberley as catch'd that crab. What makes you alays fix on me, seeing as all hands are tarr'd with the same brush ?"

"I 'm afeard so, Jem," uttered the first speaker in a tone of vexation,—"I 'm afeard so, or you 'd never let the boat move along like a dock-yard lighter, or one o' your Lunnun river barges. But come, lads, for your own sakes give way ; for I 'm d— if I bear up to-night, come on it whatsomever will."

"We *are* giving way," responded Jack Moberley, who was pretty much in the same condition as Jem. "Don't be grumbling there like a loose fid in the heel of a topmast: we *have* been taking a pull o' the jib-halliards, and what then ? You 're as fond o' splicing the main-brace as any on us."

"I don't deny it, Jack," answered the first in a more quiet tone ; "but d— the lubber as can say that Will Blocks ever look'd like a wet swab on duty. Can't you get drunk at proper times, when you 've got a just right to do it ?

and that 's when you 're on liberty, and may sarve out to yourself just what allowance you please. But d— my ould tarry trowsers if it arn't too much of a good thing to be non-compass on sarvice !"

" You 're always running foul of a poor devil if he happens to soak his biscuit a little more than usual," said Jem ; " but I don't care a tinker's d— for you, and you may tell the first leftenant if you like."

" If I was alongside o'you, Jem, I 'd just punch your pumpkin for that," returned Will Blocks angrily. " Whoever know'd me carry tales, or curry favour with any officer whatsomever ? But suppose the skipper had taken it into his calculations to have gone off with us to-night,—and it was all but a turn-up that he didn't,—then I 'm thinking you 'd have cotch'd somut more nor crabs in the morning, that 's all. I wants you to get to your hammocks ; but if you prefars exercise to rest, why then chop water as long as you likes : it 's easier steering than pulling."

Such was the conversation in the barge of the Alfred seventy-four, Captain William Bayne, then lying in Cawsand Bay under sailing orders, as she was pulling out about nine o'clock in the evening from Mount

Wise, in Stonehouse Pool, to proceed to the ship. They were a fine hearty set of fellows composing that boat's crew; the very pride of the British navy; the Tom Pipes and Jack Ratlins of Smollett's days; men that feared God, whose might and power they had so often witnessed in their favour, and defied the devil because he was an enemy. But the fact was, the ship's company had been paid six months' wages, and a very handsome share of prize-money, preparatory to their departure for the West Indies; and, as a matter of course, they spent extravagantly for the purpose of getting rid of it. The writer of old says, "Riches make unto themselves wings and flee away:" but the riches of seamen are not of an aërial character; they resolve themselves into a more liquid element, known by the name of grog. Various are the conjectures from whence the etymology of this word is derived. Some ascribe it to old Benbow, who wore what was termed a grogram jacket, and hence obtained the name of Old Grog. In some of his daring actions he refreshed his men with rum and water, which ever afterwards retained the title. Others assert, that a planter of Jamaica wishing to send a puncheon of real good stuff to George

the Second, marked upon the head G. R. O. G. for "George Rex, Old Gemakee." Another anecdote refers to the well-known act of "tapping the governor." Monsieur Guillaume Roussel, Governor of Guadaloupe, died and was shipped in a cask of rum for Europe. On the puncheon was painted "Guillaume Roussel, obit. Guadaloupe;" and round the lead that was nailed over the bung, the initials G. R. O. G. On her passage the vessel was captured by the English; and the jolly Jacks, without knowing the actual contents, soon sucked the governor dry. When they appeared rather out of order before the officer, his general exclamation was, "What, you 've been foul of the 'grog' cask again!" Whatever was the origin, certain it is that no other language has any term applicable to it by way of translation. I remember once hearing the following attempt at explanation: A ship's chaplain was commenting in one of his sermons upon the words "Oh that a man should put an enemy into his mouth to *steal* away his brains!" and during his discourse he frequently styled spirituous liquor "the rogue;" but being a North-countryman, the burr in his throat gave the word the sound of "grogue," which was seized hold of with

avidity by the tars, and applied to their favourite beverage. At all events, the barge's crew of the Alfred had been partaking freely of the generous *neck-tar*, and their excess would probably have brought some of them to the gangway, had their captain, who was a kind-hearted man, but a rigid disciplinarian, embarked with them. As it was, they had reached the dogged devil-may-care sort of feeling that rendered them either unwilling or unable to exert their strength, and ten o'clock on a tempestuous night in October found them outside that famed fortified rock in Plymouth Sound which seamen assert was the first British land made by the celebrated navigator on his return from his first voyage round the world, and has ever since borne the name of Drake's Island. A strong south-wester had set in with the flood; the sea came rolling across the mouth of the Channel with the whole weight of the Atlantic at its back; and as the boat just held sufficient way through the water to remain nearly stationary, the spray broke over the bows, and scattered its saline particles right fore and aft, to the great damping of the energies of the crew.

The individual who had assumed some degree of consequence and command, was Will

Blocks, the captain's coxswain, a splendid specimen of the man-of-war's man in the olden time; — he was about thirty years of age, a fine-looking fellow, and considered the most trustworthy as well as the best seaman in the ship. He was deeply mortified at the intoxication of the bargeman, who kept grumbling because he would not bear up for the harbour or run back into Stonehouse Pool;— his determination was fixed to get on board that night, as he had a rather important letter from the captain to deliver to the first lieutenant. It was extremely dark, almost approaching to downright impervious blackness, so that it was impossible to see beyond a boat-hook's length of the bows; when, suddenly, the barge's stem struck against something, which proved to be a small shore-boat, that appeared to have broken away from her moorings, and was drifting about at random.

"Boat ahoy!" shouted Will, but no answer was returned. "Now, lads, if you 'd been a-mind to have stretch'd out, you might have saved some poor devil his means of livelihood, by taking the punt in tow: as it is, shove her off there, for'ud — the blessing of some ould sowl or other will be lost to you — there, shove

her off, and give the barge steerage-way, at any rate."

The bowman arose from his thwart, boat-hook in hand, to obey the order; whilst some of the crew who pulled the after-oars, touched with a generous feeling towards the owner of the punt, on which perhaps depended the maintenance of a family, remonstrated with the coxswain, and promised "to stretch out if he'd take the little vessel in tow." At this moment the shrill cry of infancy was heard upon the breeze, and the bowman, with a thrill of superstitious dread, immediately stepped back into his original position.

"What the blazes is that noise?" inquired the coxswain, a strong tinge of the supernatural mingling with the humane impulse of his nature.

"It 's a sucking himp, I'm thinking," replied the bowman, shoving off the punt as she swung with the current more alongside.

"Sucking devil!" responded the coxswain scornfully, as the feeble wail again came down the blast; — "hould on there, for'ud!"

But the bowman was too much terrified at "himps" to comply; he gave the diminutive vessel a vigorous launch; the seamen, catch-

ing the infection of fear from his exclamation and conduct, stoutly plied their oars, and the barge hastily shot ahead, whilst the punt was borne away by the wind and tide.

Again arose that infantile cry, as if some child of sorrow had been rocked to sleep in its frail cradle by the billows, and the shock of collision had awoke it from its slumbers.

"If it arn't a babby, I 'm d— !" shouted Will, rising up in the stern-sheets, and fixing his keen eyes upon the receding object. "Back your paddles, men—back of all !" but the crew, wrought upon by influences which are not to be easily defined, hesitated to obey, and the tiny vessel would have soon been lost sight of in the gloom, but for the piercing eye of the coxswain, who never suffered it to escape his observation. "Back, I say, men !" he again shouted. "Why, you lubberly fools ! would you leave a young babby on such a night as this to perish ? Back of all, and be d— to you, and save your manhood !"

The men reluctantly complied, Jack Moberley declaring that "it was nothing more than one of ould Davy's young uns enjoying the breeze ;" but in a few seconds the cock-tail was on the barge's quarter, the coxswain sprang into it, and almost instantly resumed his station at

the helm with an infant in his arms. He took a turn with the shore-boat's penter to the main-sheet belaying-pin in the barge, and shouted, "Now, lads, if you'll pull neither to please God nor devil, yet for the sake o' humanity, and this here innocent babby, go your hardest, like sons o' thunder!"

This brief and characteristic appeal had its due effect, — the tars bent sturdily to their oars, and away flew the barge, in spite of all resistance from the gale above or the spring-tide below: their generosity was called into operation, all the better feelings of their nature were excited in favour of infancy; nor was there wanting that stimulus which induces a tar to believe that in succouring the helpless, he is logging a meritorious act in his own favour against the last great day of general muster. Still they passed their rough jokes on the event, as their sinewy arms frequently brought the bows of their favourite boat nearly buried in the opposing waves; but, light and buoyant, she again rose, dashing through the foam, and throwing the spray hither and thither like a fin-back at play.

The coxswain carefully wrapped the infant in his jacket, and pressing it closely to his breast, the warmth soon tranquillised its wail-

ings, and it sank into quiet slumber. It would be impossible to describe the many thoughts, wishes, and schemes, that occupied the mind of Will Blocks, as he held the little stranger in his arms and felt it nestle towards him;—all originated in the kindest intentions, arising from the noblest attributes of the human heart. Will's early life had been one of hardship; his parents were dead, he knew of no relations in the world, but he had amassed a very handsome sum in prize-money, and he formed a resolution that should no one reclaim the child, henceforward it should be his, and he would do his best endeavours to provide for it, whether it should turn out either a boy or a girl.

From the moment of their rescuing the infant, the sky began to clear and the wind to lull, which was seized hold of by the bargemen as a token that the act was approved off by One whose eye never slumbers nor sleeps, — the stars peeped forth through their fleecy curtains, and were hailed with pleasure, and the coincidence produced a powerful interest in favour of the helpless being they had saved. It was near midnight, however, before the barge got alongside the seventy-four, and Will carried his still sleeping charge aboard.

"What combustible have you got stowed

away there, Will?" inquired the midshipman of the watch.

"It 's my own image in wax-work, Muster Burton," answered the tar; "and it 's just for all the world like a lady's doll, — if you pull the strings, the eyes will slue round like a compass-card directly."

"Let 's have a look at it, Will," said the midshipman, laughing; "bring it to the binnacle-light — it will just do for a beggarlug for the top of the rudder."

"No, no, Muster Burton, I can't onkiver it to-night, for fear it should catch cowld," responded the seaman: "besides, it belongs to the barge's crew; the captain 's going to raise upon her — give her a schooner rig, and we 've pick'd up this here consarn for a figure-head; — you shall see it in the morning."

The barge and her tow were passed astern with a stout hawser, and Will went below and deposited his prize, as he called it, in his hammock, where the younker slept profoundly, till aroused by the hands being turned up at four bells in the morning watch to wash decks, &c. when the shrill pipe of the boatswain's mate was responded to by the equally shrill voice of the infant.

"Halloo! Why, Will, surely you arn't ha'

been launching a young un in the night!" exclaimed one of his messmates, whose hammock hung near him. "I never know'd you had one on the stocks. What colour is it, Will?"

"It 's a sandy-grey russet," answered Will, turning out and quieting the child: "you see I 've built a babby at last; — and now, Harry, I means to engage you as *wet* nurse, for all hands knows you 're a precious soaker."

"Well! I 'm bless'd if it arn't a right-arnest babby, and no sham!" returned Harry, looking at the infant, which smiled in his face. "Lord love the creatur! how it grins, like the top of a beggar's walking-stick; — it shall have a share of my grub, anyhow. But where did you get it, Will?"

"We found it sitting astraddle across the mooring-buoy off the dock-yard, like Bacchus riding a barrel o' swipes," replied Will with a serio-comic countenance; "and knowing as you were fond o' such playthings, why, I just brought it aboard for you to keep your hand in."

"Well, it 's a rum consarn, anyhow," uttered Harry. "Is it a cock or a hen?"

"I 'm bless 'd if I know disactly," answered the seaman laughingly; "but I guess it 's a little o' both, Harry, and double-jointed."

Numerous were the visitors who crowded round the berth to have a look at their young shipmate; nautical wit and jokes abounded, and the new-comer became the principal subject of conversation fore and aft. The first lieutenant was up early, and being informed of the circumstance of an infant being in the ship, he directed that the coxswain should bring it to him on the quarter-deck.

"So, my man, what have you got there?" inquired the officer, as Will, delicately handling the baby with one hand, pulled off his hat with the other.

"It's a young infant, yer honour," answered the seaman, "as we picked up in a shore-boat last night."

"Indeed! that 's strange," returned the lieutenant. "And what have you done with the boat?"

"It's towing astarn, sir," replied the seaman respectfully. "We ran foul of it—heard the child cry, and so I couldn't, yer honour, leave it, and——"

"Well, well, I'm not going to find fault, my man, but rather to commend," said the officer approvingly: "but come, let us see the youngster — you've got it wrapped up there like a cockroach in a thrum-mat."

" Why, ay, yer honour, I was afeard o' the cowld wind," answered Will, removing the blankets and wrappers from the child; but in unmuffling it, he made a slight mistake, for instead of showing its features to the commanding officer, he commenced at the wrong end, and presented its bare stern.

" Yes, yes, I see it is a boy, by his being lubberly-rigged," said the laughing lieutenant: " there, cover it up again."

This was the first intimation that the worthy seaman had of the sex of the helpless creature he had saved. " Ax pardon, yer honour," said Will; " yer honour must be the best judge as it regards being a boy or a girl, though I dare say the consarn's all ship-shape enough; but that warn't what I meant." He rectified his error; and as the face of a remarkably fine child, probably about eight months old, was revealed to view, the boatswain exclaimed, " There, yer honour, now I've slued him eend for eend, and you may take a cast of his countenance."

" He 's a noble fellow, certainly," said the officer as the smiling infant stretched out his arms to him. " Look here, doctor; we 've had a family affair in the night."

" God bless me! you don't say so!—what,

all safe, and I not called!" responded the surgeon as he ascended the companion to the quarter-deck. "And pray whose is it?"

"It's Will's, here," answered the lieutenant: "he can tell you all about it."

The surgeon looked at the infant, and became immediately aware by its age that his messmate was playing off a joke upon him. "It is a fine child," said he, "a very fine child: where did you get it from?"

"Why, the fact is, doctor, that a certain lady, residing you know where, took it yesterday evening to the captain, and told a lamentable tale about desertion, and duty and affection, and Captain Bayne, to save all further trouble, sent it off to you—here's his letter;" and he produced the letter which Will had brought the night before, and then fixing his eyes on the child, and quickly shifting them to the surgeon, he added, "On my life, Sims, there can't be a doubt on the subject—it's the very image of you."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" uttered the surgeon, a tell-tale rush of blood colouring all his face. "Where does the baby come from?"

Will would gladly have continued the joke of the commanding officer, but his habitual re-

spect for his superiors at once deterred him, and he briefly related the occurrence.

"And what do you mean to do with the boy?" inquired the lieutenant when the coxswain had concluded.

"Why, as it regards the matter o' that, yer honour," returned Will, nibbing the youngster under the chin, as boys do when they feed an unfledged sparrow, — "in the regard o' the matter o' that, I thinks its got a good right to be mine by the articles of law as well as war, seeing he 's a good prize; so we must rear him among us in the mess to sarve his Majesty."

"But you must make some inquiries respecting his friends," said the commanding officer, smiling at Will's arrangement.

"Friends! yer honour?" returned the tar, in a tone of doubt, as if uncertain that he had heard aright; "did you say friends?" He looked down on the crowing child. "Why, then, I 'm thinking the poor little fellow 's had d—— few of them sarved out to him, anyhow; for what but an infernal rascal would have cast such an innocent as this here upon the wide waters, like a sucking-pig adrift in his mother's trough, on such a night as last night was?"

"But you do not know, my man, what led to his deserted state," argued the surgeon. "It is really a pretty child! Are you married, Bill?"

"No, yer honour," responded the tar with a good-humoured smile; "but I arn't the first as has had a babby without the help of the parson."

Both officers laughed — the jest told — and the surgeon pursued his inquiry. "Has he no token about him?"

"Why, yes, yer honour," grumbled Will, "all's right in the regard of a token; Muster Gilmore says he's got one."

"I mean, no mark or anything about his clothes that may lead to a knowledge of the persons he belongs to," explained the doctor.

This led to an investigation. The dress was plain, but good; a small heart in needlework was discovered on the shirt; a coral necklace with a plain gold clasp was round his neck; and in the folds of his frock, between that and the petticoat, was an antique gold ring, or rather signet, having a stag's head with a dagger thrust through the neck as a crest. The shore-boat was very diminutive, with her name, "The Lovely Sally," painted inside her stern.

When Will went for his captain, he respectfully informed him of every particular, and the most diligent inquiries were instituted; but though an owner was found for the boat, who stated that he had hired it to a seafaring-looking man in the afternoon, who said he was going out to fish, yet no tidings whatever could be gained relative to the infant, and Will, after consulting his commander, declared his intention to adopt it as his own. Captain Bayne granted him four-and-twenty hours' leave of absence to make his arrangements, and gave him a letter of recommendation to a solicitor, with whom he might deposit the articles found upon the person of the child, and who might undertake its guardianship whilst the coxswain was at sea. Will had provided materials, and some of the women on board manufactured suitable apparel, so as to save the clothes the child had on when found.

The coxswain with his messmate Harry landed, and being resolved to have everything done ship-shape, they consulted the landlord of the "Roaring Boreas," who recommended them, "as mayhap the youngster hadn't been properly named when he was first launched, by all manner o' means to have him christened afore they went any further."

This advice was so reasonable and proper, that the tars at once assented to it, and taking the baby away, they started for the church, expecting to find, as was always the case on board, "some of the officers on duty." But in this they were disappointed—the church was shut up, and after ineffectually knocking at the doors for about ten minutes, they were turning away to make sail for the "Roaring Boreas" again, when a middle-aged man, with the most benevolent countenance and mild language, inquired, "What their wishes were."

"Why, yer honour," said Will, "it 's in regard o' the babby, seeing as we wants an entry made of his name, that when he comes of proper age so as to be able to larn his duty, we may know what to call him on the ship's books."

"How is it, my friend, that this child has not been brought for baptism before?" inquired the gentleman mildly.

"Yer honour?" returned Will, with a look of inquisitiveness, for the word "baptism" was new to him.

"It should have been christened before this;" said the gentleman. "But is the mother

one of my parishioners? I am the officiating clergyman here."

"God bless yer reverence, howsomever!" exclaimed Will, "and I 'm heartily glad to see you. Harry, and I have been hammering away at the doors—in all due respect, though, yer reverence—for ever so long; but as nobody never answered the signal, 'Mayhap,' thinks I, 'this here church arn't in commission, as there 's never a soul on the look-out;' and so we were just going to haul our wind out o' this, but your coming alongside has saved us all the trouble of bracing the yards about. As for the mother o' the babby being one o' your what-you-may-call-its, why then that 's more nor I can tell you. All I wants to know, yer reverence — and I axes the question in all due civility and honour,—all I wants to know is, whether you'll be so kind as to give the babby a cast of your office."

"But you come under strange circumstances, my friend," said the clergyman; "and though I do not for one moment impugn your motives, yet, as a Christian minister, it becomes my duty to make inquiry why you have brought this child in the *manner* that you have."

The tars looked at each other, and then at

the clergyman, as if sorely perplexed as to his meaning: at last, Will seemed to comprehend the difficulty, and answered, "Is it in regard o' my handling the babby? Oh! then, yer reverence, I arn't had much practice in that 'ere way, seeing as we only picked the youngster up a day or two ago; and nursing, I take it, wants discrimmagement as well as cuckoo-clock making."

"Only pick'd the child up a day or two ago!" repeated the clergyman, almost as much puzzled as the seamen: "what do you mean? But do not let us remain here. Though our professions are different, I being the minister of peace, and you the agents of warfare, yet I love the brave defenders of my country, and shall feel honoured by having them beneath my roof. My house is close at hand; come with me, then—we can see to the christening afterwards."

With many and repeated thanks they followed their spiritual guide, and entered a comfortable dwelling, where they were greeted by the kind-hearted lady of the minister, who took the child, and fondled it, whilst Will related every occurrence that had taken place, from the starting from Mount Wise with the

barge on the night they picked up the infant, down to the present moment.

"It is in good truth a most remarkable incident," said the worthy divine; "but the hand of Providence is everywhere. You do right, my friend, to have the child named. Pray, are the sponsors ready?"

"Oh yes, yer reverence," replied the coxswain, lugging out a canvass bag of guineas, "the 'sponsibles are all ready."

"No, no, my man, I did not mean that," returned the clergyman, smiling; "I mean the godfathers and godmother." But observing that the seamen did not comprehend him, he explained that the coxswain and his messmate Harry would do to undertake the office of godfathers, but it would be necessary also to have a godmother.

"If you have no objections, my dear," said Mrs. Hector, "I will with pleasure act in that capacity to the pretty little fellow. He has not numbered many months, but his history is peculiarly surprising."

"As you please, my dear," assented her husband; "but do not take upon yourself so serious a responsibility without consideration. What do you mean to do with this infant, my friend?"

"Well, then, yer reverence, I must chalk it out a nurse somewhere or other, seeing as we 're off to the West Ingees in a few days," replied Blocks.

"I do not wish to be prying or impertinent, but of course you have sufficient resources?" said the clergyman.

"Why, no, yer reverence," answered Will hesitatingly, "I carn't say as I have, as I knows of."

"Who, then, will provide for the child in your absence, my friend?" asked the minister.

"Oh, ay, now I understands," responded the coxswain, at once comprehending the word "resources," and pulling out the captain's letter: "d 'ye see, I 've a goodish lot of prize-money, and so I 'm going to place the consarn in the hands of the gentleman as is on the back of this here," showing the direction;—"it 's a chit of palaver from Captain Bayne to Muster—Muster—it 's a short name."

"Brief," said the clergyman, reading the writing. "I know him, and he truly merits the name of an honest lawyer."

"But have you no nurse, nor any place to leave the child?" inquired the lady.

"No, yer ladyship, not none in the least," returned Will. "But here 's Harry and I

have got four-and-twenty hours' leave to *derange* matters in; and if yer ladyship could place a couple of tars upon the right tack, why, then, may God A'mighty bless the heart he has placed in yer ladyship's busom!"

"I think I can manage it for you, with Mr. Hector's sanction," said the lady, "and undertake the responsibility too. The child's history has greatly interested me; and it would be a sad pity for him to get into bad hands. But let us have him christened first — then go to Mr. Brief, and settle matters with that gentleman. In the mean time, I will make inquiry for a suitable person to take care of the infant; and you can return here when it suits you."

"That is so like yourself, my dear," said the clergyman, placidly and pleased, "that I cannot raise a single objection. I have sent for the clerk, and everything will soon be in readiness for the service."

The infant looked about him with great delight, and seemed to notice things in a manner that excited astonishment in the minds of the unsophisticated tars; and Will augured that "he should some day or other see him a great man."

"And, I trust, a good one," added Mr.

Hector; "for there is no true greatness without the corresponding qualities which form the Christian. Providence has thus far favoured him — he has fallen into benevolent hands. And remember, my friends, the voice of unerring wisdom has said, 'Forasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these, ye have done it unto me.' May the generosity you have manifested on this occasion prove the source of blessing to all!"

In a short time the clerk announced everything prepared; and, the minister's wife carrying the child, they entered the church and proceeded to the font. Several stragglers, whom idleness and curiosity had drawn together, were present; and a number of seamen on liberty, who knew their brother tars of the Alfred, joined company, wondering to find themselves inside such a grand place. When all the circumstances are taken into consideration, the spectacle was an extremely interesting one. There stood the minister, in his white surplice, by the side of an antique font, used in the days when dipping, not sprinkling, was the general mode of baptism. Near him was the clerk—grey-headed, with small eyes, and a consequential look that spoke him a man of great estimation in his own opinion — one

who would have liked to have said "I" to everything, but was compelled to adopt, in most cases, the first person plural. On the opposite side of the font appeared the clergyman's wife, in a dress of white muslin, holding the capering and crowing boy in her arms; whilst the tars, in their blue jackets and duck trowsers, placed themselves in front, facing the minister, with a solemnity on their countenances which they actually felt in their hearts. A bright gleam of sunshine came through the stained glass of the windows, throwing a variety of glorious tints around all, and giving an admirable finish to the picture.

The ceremony commenced; the clergyman, from being apprised of the nature of the case, omitting the opening question. But there was some difficulty in making the godfathers comprehend the subsequent inquiries. They readily promised "to renounce the devil and all his works;" but when the question was put, "Wilt thou be baptized in this faith?" Will hesitated.

"You must say, 'That is my desire,'" whispered the clerk, somewhat scandalised at the want of promptitude in the reply.

"Avast, ould gentleman!" responded Will

respectfully: "it arn't me, but the babby, as is going to be thingumed."

"The infant cannot answer for itself," said Mr. Hector with patient meekness, "and therefore you, as its godfathers, become sureties."

"It 's all a matter of form," chimed in the clerk with self-complacency; "you must make the response."

"Now, yer reverence, I can understand being bound for the babby," uttered Will; "but I can't disactly make out the argufication of this ould gentleman here. If so be as Harry and I undertakes a solemn engagement, we considers it as double-bitted round our consciences to hould on by it; but if it 's no more than a mere matter of form, why then I 'm thinking——"

"It is not a mere matter of form, my friends," answered the clergyman, "but such as you take it to be—a solemn engagement,"—and his voice assumed a deep pathos,—"entered into with the Majesty of Heaven—the King of kings. As godfathers to the infant, wilt thou that it should be baptized in this faith?"

"Yes, yer reverence," answered the coxswain firmly; "and may God A'mighty spare

our lives—that 's Harry and me—to do our duties by the child !"

The following prayers, fervently offered up by the divine, were listened to with the most earnest attention by the seamen ; but when he came to the part " Name this child," the tar again hesitated.

" Why, in the regard o' that, yer reverence," said Will in a tone of mingled perplexity and determination,—" why, I must own that it has rather puzzled my edecation a bit, because, d' ye see ——"

" You mustn't talk to the minister, but tell the name," said the clerk, interrupting him.

" So I wool, ould gentleman," returned the seaman, rather offended with the interference of the official ; " but his reverence, I take it, arn't the person to throw a poor tar slap aback because, mayhap, he hasn't paid out the slack of ' Amen' so often as you have.—I 'm saying, yer reverence, as Harry and I have had a bit of a court of inquiry with my ould shipmate as keeps the ' Roaring Boreas,' and ——"

" What is your own name ?" inquired the lady, fully sensible of the embarrassment of

her husband, and desirous of putting an end to it as early as possible.

"My name, yer ladyship!" reiterated the tar: "why, my name is Will!—Will Blocks; and my messmate's, here, is Harry Finn,—Ould Flipper, as we calls him aboard: arn't it, Harry?—speak up for yourself, man."

"Yes, that 'ere 's the name my mother guv me," replied the tar; "and it's logged down in the parish muster-book at Sevenoaks in Kent."

"But the name of the infant,—the name!" said the clerk impatiently; "you mustn't keep the minister waiting."

"Avast, again, ould gentleman," uttered Will rather peevishly: "I 'm thinking you're shoving your oar in where it arn't wanted."

"My good man," said the lady kindly, "if you have not already fixed upon a name, may I be permitted to suggest one? Yours is William, and your shipmate's is Henry: why, then, not have it William Henry, after our gallant young Prince, who, like yourselves, is in the naval service of his country?"

A buzz of approbation arose from the assembled seamen, to the manifest disturbance of the clerk; and many a blessing on the lady's

head came from hearts that were honest and fervent in the wish.

The coxswain pondered a few minutes, — whispered to his brother godfather, who shook his head, and then exclaimed, "Why, no, yer ladyship: though it would pleasure us both — that's Harry and me, yer ladyship—to have him named arter a son of our good ould King—God bless him!—yet, as names are somut like junk, generally cut up into short lengths when they're wanted, why, if he was to be christened William Henry, it ud soon get shortened into Will or Harry, and he'd float along without its ever being noticed; so, if yer reverence pleases, you may just christen him Ten-thousand Topsail-sheet Blocks;" and the tar gave a knowing hitch to his trowsers, and a circumferential twist to his tarpaulin hat.

If the seamen had before expressed approval of the proposition of Mrs. Hector, they now were in the indulgence of irrepressible gratification. William Henry, the name of his Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence, had influenced their pride; but the latter was so connected with all their nautical feelings, that the sacred edifice echoed to a British cheer.

The clergyman and his excellent lady were

for a minute or two quite staggered, and could scarcely refrain from laughter, so exquisitely ludicrous was the sudden announcement; whilst the clerk raised his hands and opened his eyes in utter amazement.

"Ten-thousand what?" inquired Mr. Hector, his gravity temporarily yielding to the excitement.

"Ten-thousand Topsail-sheet Blocks," repeated Will clearly and deliberately: "arn't that it, Harry?" The seaman assented by a nod.

"Are you really serious, my good fellow?" asked the minister, scarcely able to keep his countenance at the apparent sincerity of the tars.

"Why, yer reverence," returned the coxswain with greater solemnity, and lowering his voice to a deeper tone, "it arn't in a place like this, built and rigg'd, as I take it, for the peculiar sarvice of our Maker, that a man ought to be otherwise than serious: but if yer reverence thinks I've said or done anything contrary to regulations, why then I hopes you'll have the goodness to put in a word or two on my behalf, and make all square again."

"You mistake me, my friend," said the mi-

nister, at once called to the recollection of the sacred character of his office by the unintentional reproof of the seaman: "but do you really wish, and intend to give the child so strange a name?"

"Why, that's just it, yer reverence," responded Will, reassured by the gentleness and bland deportment of the minister; "for, being a rather out-of-the-way sort of a consarn, like a fisherman's boot with a horse-dragoon's spur on it, we — that's Harry and me, yer reverence — we both on us thought that whomsomever heard the boy hailed by his name, would nat'rally be axing how he came by it; and so, mayhap, when his story's tould, it may chance to lead to the knowledge of his parents, and the true bearings and distance of the cause of his being turn'd adrift upon a sea-cruise with such a slender outfit."

"Well, there certainly is sound argument in that, I must admit," assented the clergyman; and taking the laughing infant in his arms, he sprinkled its face with water, and, to the great surprise of the clerk (who seemed almost scandalised by the transaction), but to the unbounded delight of the seamen, he was named accordingly "TEN-THOUSAND TOPSAIL-SHEET BLOCKS."

At the conclusion of the service, every tar crowded in to have a kiss of the baby, which they considered now as more especially and particularly devoted to their own peculiar calling. Will respectfully invited Mr. Hector to accompany him to the "Roaring Boreas," to drink the youngster's health, which the minister mildly declined. He then invited the clerk, who peremptorily refused, and plainly told them, he thought "they were no better than barbarians, to give a Christian such a heathenish name."

"Never mind, ould crusty," said Will, pitching him half-a-guinea; "go and get a glass o' grog to warm the fag eend o' your nose: and, I say, belay all animosity, and drink the boy's health and prosperity with all becoming piety,—for it 's a rough world, and mayhap he may want a friend in the steeple as well as in the church.—Come along, lads! I 'll be alongside of you again, directly I 've seen Muster Brief, yer ladyship.—Come along, my hearties! let 's go and give old Joe Breeze a benefit at the Roaring Boreas, all hands of you! sailor and landsman, seaman and lubber. Heave ahead, my boys!" And taking the child in his arms, he bowed to the minister and his wife, and passed down the aisle towards the

entrance. He stopped, however, just within the doorway, attracted by a box on a wooden pillar, having painted upon it, "Remember the poor." Will spelt it out, and dropping in a guinea, his example, as far as charity went, though the amount might not be exactly the same, was pretty generally followed by all who had aught to give.

Joe Breeze was in sea-raptures when he ascertained that "all was ship-shape in regard o' the name:" the grog was set a-broach, good roast and boiled of every description made the tables groan, and the worthy coxswain, that the christening might have proper *éclat*, invited every seaman he could pick up to partake of the cheer. Previous, however, to joining the convivial party, he resolved to complete another part of his undertaking, by waiting on the lawyer. Away strode Will, with the baby and the bundle, disregarding the observations which his appearance called forth from the passers-by, nor stopped till the letters "BRIEF, **Solicitor,** on a handsome brass plate, brought him up. The first word he readily spelt, but he could make nothing out of the other, and supposed it to be "some outlandish lingo, to show the lawyer's larning." Without hesitation he rang the bell, and a

spruce young clerk appearing, inquired his business.

"Does Muster Brief live here?" asked Will, after a polite bow.

"No," answered the clerk, with a pragmatical grin; "but he gets his living here. What do you want with him, Jack?"

"You don't do all your master's business for him, I take it?" responded the coxswain, offended with the young man's impertinence.

"Not exactly: I don't do the eating and drinking," replied the clerk; "he keeps the goose to himself."

"And sarves you up for sauce," uttered Will, with a knowing look, as much as to say, "There's a Roland for your Oliver."

"Come, that's a fair hit, however," said the young man: "walk in, sailor. — What! you made out the name, eh! — took a *spell* at it, I suppose."

"Why, yes," replied the coxswain, "I made out this here to be 'Brief,' because it's logged down in plain English; — but I suppose this monkeyfied, all legs-and-wings consarn, means you, seeing as nobody can understand it."

"No, my friend," dissented the clerk, more complacently, finding he had got hold of a

queer customer; "that word stands for So-li-cit-or."

"Or, what! and be d— to you!" growled the seaman. "You 're a rum 'un to gammon a flat, Muster Lawyer; but you don't gammon me with your 'Stand so—lie—sit,' let me tell you. I wants to get alongside o' Muster Brief, and, to make short work of it, d 'ye hear,—is at home or not?"

"He is in his office, Mister Sailor," answered the clerk. "Come in, and I 'll let him know you are awaiting an interview."

In a few minutes afterwards the coxswain was ushered into a comfortable and airy apartment, where, at a table covered with books and papers nicely arranged, sat an elderly man, with a hatchet-like contour of face that gave him a peculiarly sharp look, and a pair of eyes that would have stitched the button-hole of a shirt, they were so piercing. "Your business?" inquired he.

"Why, yer honour," returned the seaman, unshipping his truck and depositing it on the floor, "I come from Captain Bayne."

"Good! — client of mine!" returned the worthy construer of statutes. "Proceed."

"Well, yer honour," said Will, approaching nearer to the table, "by his orders I 've

brought you Ten-thousand Topsail-sheet Blocks."

"Brought what!" screamed the man of the law, jumping up from his chair in amazement, and fixing his keen gaze upon the tar.

"Ten-thousand Topsail-sheet Blocks, yer honour," returned the tar, placidly but firmly.

"Ten thousand devils!" ejaculated the lawyer with fierce impatience.

"No, yer honour, not by no manner o' means in the regard o' the gentleman you 've named," uttered the coxswain, equally warm; for the dandified conduct of the clerk, and the somewhat repulsive treatment of the lawyer himself, had put Will upon his mettle. "It 's blocks, not devils."

"One or the other, what can Captain Bayne mean?" returned Mr. Brief. "Does he take my office for a dock-yard? Ten thousand!—why, where am I to put them all?"

"The duds, yer honour?" asked the coxswain rather more quietly. "Oh, never fear; they 'll not take up much room for stowage, seeing as they 're all in this here bag," holding it up at arm's length.

"Ten thousand topsail-sheet blocks in that bag!" exclaimed the lawyer, approaching to lay hold of it.

"No, yer honour," responded the coxswain, laughing outright. "He arn't in the bag. Lord love you! no: it's the duds."

"Really, my good fellow, this is all mystery to me," said the professional personage with greater gravity and mildness. "Have you no communication — no letter from the captain that may afford an explanation?"

"By the tropics of war, and that's just it, yer honour," returned the coxswain; and, stooping down, he took a letter from beneath the lining of his hat and presented it to Mr. Brief.

The solicitor received the letter, walked to his chair, sat down and attentively perused it, then raising his sharp keen eyes to Will, he said,

"There's nothing about ten thousand or topsail-sheets here, my man. The captain writes about an infant."

"And here it is, all alive and kicking! yer honour," exclaimed Will, showing the baby; "and his name is Ten-thousand Topsail-sheet Blocks, in regard of his having been christened this very morning."

"Ho, ho!" rejoined the lawyer, who now began to understand the matter. "Ay, ay! Your name is Blocks, I presume?"

At this moment Captain Bayne himself entered the office, and the whole affair was soon made clear to the ready comprehension of Mr. Brief, who without hesitation undertook the guardianship of the child. The "duds" were rigidly inspected — replaced in the bag, which was fastened round with red tape, sealed up, labelled, and deposited in a large iron-safe. Orders were given for the preparation of documents and deeds. All the leading features of the case were taken down upon the coxswain's deposition, everything was at length finally arranged, and Will took his departure for the "Roaring Boreas," where having reported progress to old Joe Breeze, and left the infant in care of Mrs. Breeze, he joined his shipmates over their carouse. A general cheer followed his entrance into the great room, where some forty or fifty tars were getting into the happy sort of independence that mocks at discipline: but then they were ashore.

At the head of the table sat old Joe, his silvery hairs floating over his forehead and about his temples, and his breast full of

enjoyment and gratification. He wore long togs, it is true; but his black silk handerchief was still knotted round his neck according to old custom, and he had also a handsome silver chain and call that was presented to him by General Elliott, after the defeat of the Spaniards before Gibraltar, in the combined attack of Spain and France, on the 13th September 1782. Joe at that period was boatswain's mate of the Brilliant frigate, commanded by Captain Roger Curtis; but all hands being sent to Europa Point to man the batteries, Joe had charge of a couple of guns, and pointed them so admirably as to call forth repeated commendations from the commander-in-chief; and he was the first in the barge when Captain Curtis went out to rescue the drowning men from the burning wrecks. The coxswain was killed by a falling timber from one of the Spanish line-of-battle ships that blew up, and Joe and another were severely wounded; a hole was knocked through the bottom of the barge, into which the crew thrust their jackets, and Joe stretching himself upon them, prevented their being washed inward, and probably saved the whole of their lives. For his gallantry Captain Curtis strongly recommended him to the ge-

neral, who not only presented him with the memorial before mentioned, but also subsequently obtained for him a comfortable pension, with which and his prize-money he looked out for a berth ashore. His favourite house of entertainment at Plymouth was the Pig and Whistle, kept by a decent linsey-woolsey widow named Gale, for whom Joe had had a sort of half-and-half regard many years before. She complained of being a lone woman in a manner that becalmed honest Joe's heart; he saw which way the wind lay, and he made her an offer. It was promptly accepted, and, as Joe said, "he changed a heavy Gale into a pleasant Breeze;" nor had he ever any occasion to repent it. His stream of life flowed smoothly on: he altered the sign of the house from the Pig and Whistle (which seemed something of a reflection upon himself and his silver call) to the Roaring Boreas, typified by the head of a chubby butcher's boy blowing wooden skewers; he carried on a rattling business, had served the office of overseer of the poor to the satisfaction of all parties, was respected and esteemed by every one, and particularly by his old shipmates, who consulted him on most occasions, from the buying of a watch to the purchase of a vessel;

a number of the neighbouring tradesmen constantly passed their evenings in his snug parlour; and, to make short of it, Joe was far happier than the king he loved.

As soon as Will Blocks was seated, Joe clapped his call to his lips and gave three chirps; and no admiral who ever carried such an article slung at his button-hole as the symbol of his rank was ever more promptly obeyed. Drunk and sober were instantly silent as Joe rose and thus addressed them: "Genlemen, shipmates, allow me to propose a toast;—(cheers)—but, for the honour of the sarvice and for your headification, let me offer a few words afore I commences,—I mean, afore I drinks it; though any on you as is thirsty may take a fresh nip at starting, and no disparagement." This was universally adopted. "Genlemen, every man fore-and-aft, whatsomever his station may be, either aboard or ashore, is bound to do his duty by a messmate at all times; rig out his fin to a shipmate in distress, help a brother tar when he finds him hard up, and d— the lubberly Crapooos. (Loud cheers.) What's the use, genlemen, of a ship's colours, if so be they're not allowed to be hoisted, to show what nation a craft belongs to? and what's the upshot of wearing a blue

jacket if it arn't to be taken as proof positive that it kivers and keeps warm a bould and generous heart? (Great applause, and cries of 'Go it, my hearty!') In my course through life, fair weather and foul, why, d'ye see, I've headed to every point of the compass except lubber's point; though mayhap, when a younker not much higher than the combings of a hatchway, I might take that first. Well, I've headed, as I said, to every point—ay, and every half-point too; sometimes under bare poles, or with a smack smooth deck; at other some, with studdensels packed on alow and aloft; often with three anchors ahead and stranded cables, and having a reef of dark rocks grinning and roaring like devils himps dead under our lee, and then again laying all ataunto with open hawse atwixt the two bowers, covered with flags from the jib-boom end right up to the three trucks, and so chock aft to the ring-tail iron on the spanker-boom, as fine as a chimbly-sweep on a May-day: and I've always found that the best way to keep a clear conscience, barring now and then sucking the monkey, is to do unto others as you would have it sarved out to yourselves;—(cheers)—and when death threatens to fall athwart your bows and cut

your cables, no remembrance is so precious as having helped a fellow-creature as was struggling against trouble and adversity, — ay, even a Frenchman, after he has hauled down his ensign, barring he has fought fairly and is no coward. Now, messmates, I don't mean to say you 're to be like a dog as is everlastingly in chase of his tail, and never claps it alongside, for proper discrimmagement is always necessary; but d— the heart as would let a fellow-creature sink whilst calculating the chances of getting a wet jacket to save him! (Applause.) That 's my mark, and brings me at once slap home to the toast. Will Blocks, (reiterated cheers)—Will Blocks, (another cheer, and a sound of Joe's call)—Will Blocks and I have been messmates and shipmates on and off for more nor twenty years. I taught him to hand, reef, and steer; and a 'cute scholar I found him at larning, so that he was soon able to beat his ould master. I know him to be a thorough seaman, and I hopes to live till he gets a handle to his name—(cheers); but it ain't in the regard o' tha alone that I speak—it is the noble and generous disposition which has mark'd his cha-rackter through life. Messmates, his last act does him honour, and will be logg'd down in favour of a blue-jacket

through a long line of our hangcestors yet unborn: it brings credit on us all, and therefore, messmates, I begs leave to propose health and prosperity to Will Blocks, with three times three."

The long pulls at the grog, and the enthusiastic cheering, showed the good feeling of the tars; and when it had subsided, the coxswain rose from his seat and said—

"Messmates and shipmates, it arn't necessary, as I take it, for a fellow to have the gift of the gab to fight an enemy or to sarve a friend: but when he wants to pay out a goodish scope of gratitude and friendly hailings to them as wishes him well, then some o' your 'longshore talk would sarve to veer and haul upon; and if I had any coiled away in my breast, d— me if I wouldn't at this moment let it run out to the clinch, and hould on by your regards. (Loud cheers.) In the respect o' the younker, — God A'mighty bless him!" and Will's voice faltered:—"I'm saying, that in respect o' the younker, all's fair and square, and I hopes we shall all live to see him hammer the French and do his duty like a man. I thank you from the very bottom of my sowl, messmates, for the manner in which you have drank my health, and axes it as a favour,

that you will all drink long life, happiness, and prosperity to Ten-thousand Topsail-sheet Blocks."

A round of applause followed the toast: the infant was brought into the room, and old Joe gave it a taste of his grog; the younker smacked his lips, caught hold of the glass, and when Will took him in his arms to carry him away, he seemed delighted with the noise. In a short half-hour they were at Mr. Hector's; and his excellent wife gladdened the heart of the coxswain by introducing to him a clean, motherly-looking woman, who would immediately take charge of young Ten. He gave the child a kiss, pressed a handsome gratuity upon the worthy clergyman, deposited a five-pound note in the hands of Mrs. Hector to buy "immediate sarvice duds" for the boy—warmly expressed his gratitude for their generous kindness—took another and a last kiss of his young protégé, and then joined his shipmates at the Roaring Boreas over their grog, and passed a jovial night.

The following morning, accompanied by his messmate Harry, he signed, sealed, and delivered over his will, with power of attorney to Mr. Brief, and was true to a minute on the Alfred's deck. Blue peter was flying at the

fore, a convoy was waiting off the Ram Head, and before night, the gallant seventy-four was leading them down Channel with a spanking breeze. They reached the West Indies in safety, and led the van of the fleet under Sir Samuel Hood, in the engagement with the Count de Grasse on the 29th April 1781, off Martinique, in which the Alfred behaved extremely well, against a very superior force, there being seventeen sail of the British line against twenty-four French sail of the line. On the 15th September in the same year, they were again engaged with the same opponents, the Alfred once more leading the van, off the Chesapeake, when fifteen sail of the British line attacked and drove into port twenty sail of the French line. Arduous and incessant were the duties they had now to perform during the next six months—one unfortunately arose from falling foul of the Nymphe frigate, by which both ships were considerably damaged. The navy at that period had not attained to the sanatory perfection which subsequently became so beneficial to the health of the men; and the climate of the West Indies, to which they returned, was very destructive to human life. Yet Will weathered it all, breezes and calms, squalls and sunshine, fair winds and

foul, fever and ague, physic and land-crabs and his general good behaviour marked him out for promotion;—indeed, Captain Bayne, who had been partly brought up under Boscawen, was not the man to keep merit in obscurity, though he acknowledged he should very much regret parting with his coxswain.

The separation, however, took place much sooner than either expected, and the sorrow was more of a national than an individual character. In February 1782, Sir George Rodney joined Sir Samuel Hood off Antigua, and took the chief command. After refitting at St. Lucia, and watching the enemy (who, by keeping close under Guadaloupe and Dominica, contrived to elude the vigilance of the English, and get into Fort Royal Bay), they again put to sea, and discovered that the Count de Grasse had quitted Martinique, in order to run down to leeward, for the purpose of effecting a junction with the Spaniards, and making a grand attack upon the island of Jamaica. On the night of the 8th April, the enemy were observed by the British fleet under Dominica, in charge of a large convoy, and the gallant Rodney made the signal for a general chase; so that early the next morning, several of the leading ships (amongst which

was the Alfred) were close up with their transports, &c., the main body of the French fleet forming the line-of-battle to windward upon the starboard tack, heading for Guadaloupe. The British admiral then hoisted the signal to form the line; but the ships being becalmed under the high land at Dominica, could not readily take their stations. It was a trying and anxious moment. There lay the hostile fleets perfectly unmanageable;— the French, desirous of escaping, so as to carry their design into execution; the British, eager to lay them alongside, and already singling out the prizes they should win: yet, there they lay, motionless, watching the dark line upon the verge of the horizon that evidenced the coming breeze.

The Count de Grasse, in his superb ship the Ville de Paris, proudly walked his deck; but, well knowing the prowess of our hardy tars, his heart was ill at ease. The magnificent vessel that bore his flag was a present from the citizens of Paris to that strange compound of a monarch Louis XV. Her building and outfit had cost upwards of 170,000*l.* sterling; and brave as the Count was, the bare idea of his gallant first-rate gracing the triumph of his opponents was

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truly galling. He was well aware that he would have many resolute supporters, but he also had good reasons for doubting the courage of others; yet he determined that his own conduct should afford a bright example for the rest. No less than thirteen hundred men were at their quarters in that floating fabric, the best of Gallia's boast.

And there in the British fleet lay a small black seventy-four, her commander a thorough tar of the old school, well known amongst the seamen as "Billy Blue." In those days, the wages of the seamen were not over regularly paid—long arrears were frequently due, and this was the case with the ship here mentioned. Previous to coming out with Rodney, the ship's company addressed a round-robin to the skipper, remonstrating against the injustice of neglecting their pay, as they were nearly destitute of clothing, and declaring they would not lift an anchor or fire a gun till their equitable demands were satisfied. Cornwallis knew and felt the impolicy and impropriety of keeping back the arrears; he was the seaman's friend, and well acquainted with all their peculiarities—so he ordered the hands to be sent aft, and when they had mustered, he told them, the stoppage of their pay was no

fault of his, and therefore they could not blame him for it. If, then, such was the case, disobedience to his orders would be a far worse offence than that from which they were then suffering, as it would be inflicting punishment on him for the faults of others. He appealed to their generosity, assured them of his best endeavours to get the grievance remedied, but in case affairs could not be arranged in time ——

"You must lift the anchors, my lads," said he, "ay, and stow them too. Who is there amongst you that wouldn't sail with Rodney? And as for fighting, leave that to me, my men, leave that to me; for if we do fall in with the enemy, I'll take care to clap you alongside of the largest ship in his fleet, and then, my lads, you may just do as you please. Get a smell of French powder, and the devil himself won't keep you from your guns. I'll do all I can for you, my men; I admit you 're not well treated, but trust to me to keep my word."

The people had assembled with hostile feelings and angry countenances—they expected to meet with sturdy opposition from Billy Blue; but his conciliating language overpowered them, and they gave him three hearty

cheers, which had no sooner subsided than the call of the boatswain's mate resounded, and his hoarse voice was heard —" Grog a-hoy !" In fact, the grog, an extra allowance, had been mixed all ready, and the honest Jacks acquiesced in the reasonableness of the skipper's arguments, and quietly returned to their duty, implicitly relying on the promise they had received. Captain Cornwallis wrote to the Admiralty; but the Canada was ordered to sea before accounts were settled—the men reluctantly obeyed orders—but through the judicious management of the commander, they became more satisfied, and joined the fleet. And now, there stood Billy Blue, on the break of the Canada's poop, glass in hand, examining with minute inspection the whole of the enemy's line, as they caught a light breeze that just gave them steerage way. At length his look became fixed, a smile played upon his countenance, and taking the glass from his eye, he directed his first lieutenant " to send the hands on the quarter-deck." In a few minutes every soul fore and aft, with heads uncovered, stood on the place of honour. " Send Benson, the quarter-master, here !" hailed the captain, and the individual named instantly stepped out from amongst the rest. He was a tall sturdy

man, six feet in height, well made, and with open manly features: he had light hair, with a ponderous tail behind, and though the leader of the mal-contents, there was nothing in his manner indicative of bad feeling or disrespect. "Come up here, Benson," said the captain, and the quarter-master promptly obeyed. "Take my glass: look at the enemy's centre, and tell me what you see."

The man unhesitatingly complied, took the glass, and directing his sight as ordered, replied, "Ships in confusion, sir."

"And what sort of ships are they, my man?" asked the captain, to the surprise of the crew, to whom the conversation was perfectly audible.

"There's two seventy-fours, sir; one eighty, and"—he hesitated a moment, as if undetermined in his object; he was desirous of a better view.

"And what?" inquired Cornwallis, his eyes sparkling with pleasure.

"And a three-decker, sir, with an admiral's flag at the main," answered Benson, raising himself from the stooping position in which he had reconnoitred.

"Good,—very good—you're a man of discernment, Benson," uttered the captain, good-

humouredly; "that is the Ville de Paris, one of the finest ships out of France, carrying the flag of Count de Grasse. She's the craft for us, my men; and as you found me faithful in my word to try and get your arrears of pay, so now you shall see me adhere to my promise in running alongside of the biggest ship I can find. There she is, my lads! and I shall just place you in a proper position, that she may blow the little black ship out of the water if you wish it. Where's your no-fighting men now?" The seamen hung down their heads like great boys at school when lectured by the master, or caught in some trap they had set for others. "If there are any amongst you who are afraid of a few shot, why stow yourselves away in the pump-well or the hold? Let the no-fighting skulkers come aft here on the poop; and my own Canadas, who will stand by their captain and officers, jump down to their quarters." He raised his hand, the drum beat, and in an instant every soul was stationed at his proper gun.

The French fleet consisted of thirty-four sail of the line, two fifty-gun ships, ten frigates, seven brigs, two fire-ships and a cutter, besides merchantmen and transports. Sir George Rodney had thirty-six sail of the line, besides

smaller vessels. The enemy first caught the breeze; but it was not long in reaching Sir Samuel Hood and his brave associates, who in the van division stood for the enemy's centre, when the action commenced, and was continued for some time, the van bearing nearly the whole brunt of the fire from every ship in the French fleet. The Barfleur, the Royal Oak, the Alfred, and the Montague, suffered very severely; but the centre of the British getting the wind, were soon enabled to join in the fight, and the rear division likewise coming up, the French shortly after made off, leaving the English to repair their damages.

The Alfred was the second ship in Sir Samuel Hood's division; and nobly did she sustain her character. Will Blocks was at the wheel, and steadily did his steering answer to the con of the master or the captain. Cornwallis fulfilled his engagement, and boldly attacked the Ville de Paris, his men behaving every way worthy of their gallant chief. It was about seven bells in the forenoon, when, just as Captain Bayne was descending the poop ladder, a shot from the Glorieux, (carrying a white flag at the fore,) struck him on the thigh and shattered it to atoms. He held on by the man rope, and was easing himself

gently down to the quarter deck, when Will started from the wheel, caught him in his arms, and supported him till the arrival of the surgeon, who was some time before he could gain the deck with his instruments. The hemorrhage was very great, nor could anything stop it. The brave man was carried by his coxswain into the cabin. He requested the first lieutenant to carry on the duty, as Blocks was sufficient to take care of him. The doctor was about to apply the tourniquet; but before he could fix it, amidst the rattle of broadsides and the roar of warfare, the spirit of the gallant chieftain took its flight for ever.

Three days after, the great battle was fought; Sir George had by skilful manœuvres gained the weather gauge of the enemy, and broke their line in the old Formidable, followed by his seconds the Namur* and Canada. The Ville de Paris, the Glorieux, the Cesar, the Hector, and the Ardent were taken, and history gives the following record. "The conduct of the Canada, Captain Cornwallis, excited great admiration. After singly engaging a French seventy-four until she struck, he bore

* For many years afterwards guardship at the Nore, and well known to the junior officcer in the service.

down to the Ville de Paris, and was the longest engaged with her while the French fire was most violent." Another historian says, "The well-directed fire from the Canada annoyed the French admiral so much, particularly in his rigging and sails, that made it impossible for him to escape. But the Count de Grasse, although cut to pieces, seemed determined to sink rather than yield to anything under a flag. At length Sir Samuel Hood came up in the Barfleur, and sixty men fell from her first broadside. In less than ten minutes more the colours of this beautiful ship were hauled down." So that it appears Billy Blue rigidly kept his word. In the Ville de Paris were found no less than thirty-six chests of money, intended for the pay and subsistence of the troops in the contemplated invasion of Jamaica.

Besides Captain Bayne, Captain Blair of the Anson was also killed, and Lord Robert Manners, brother to the Duke of Rutland, a young nobleman of great promise, who, though only twenty-five years of age, fought the Resolution most ably, was so severely wounded, that he died on board the Andromache, on her passage to England. The parliament, to perpetuate their memory, and at the same time to

manifest economy, gave these brave men a joint-stock monument in St. Paul's Cathedral.

The Alfred suffered severely in the gale of wind which destroyed several of the British fleet and all the prizes on the 16th September. The glorious trophy, the Ville de Paris, foundered; the Ramilies and Centaur shared the same fate, and scarcely a ship escaped uninjured. Will at length arrived off the Land's End, the Alfred in a sad leaky state, her main and mizen masts gone; but his heart was in the right place, though he deeply felt the loss of his kind and excellent patron.

CHAPTER II.

How gay and brave they sailed from port! How many
a kind heart threw
A last farewell to the parting ship, and her young and
gallant crew!
Now in the desert sea she lies, a helpless silent thing;
Linked to a tale of blood and crime, of death and
sorrowing!

W. B. Chorley.

During the absence of the worthy seaman, young Ten-thousand improved amazingly in growth and vigour. The person with whom he had been placed most honestly and faithfully discharged her duty. She respected the clergyman and his kind-hearted lady, who were not only constant in their inquiries after his welfare, but frequently had the boy to visit them at their house, where Mrs. Hector was a godmother in practice as well as in name, and inculcated those principles into his mind which can never be imparted at too early an age. "Train up a child in the way in which it should go," was a favourite maxim with her;

and having no family of her own on whom to practise the precept, she devoted her best energies to fulfil the obligations she had undertaken for the poor little fellow who had been so strangely thrown upon her care. Mr. Brief made his monthly professional inspection and payment as regularly as clock-work. Nearly the same words, at the same hour of the day, were uttered twelve times in each year. The boy was honoured by a gracious pat on the head in the way of encouragement. The nurse received her money carefully done up in paper, a piece of red tape fastened round it, and sealed with the office seal, bearing the word so much prized by barristers, "Brief!" The receipt was all prepared ready for signing, the name of the nurse was affixed, and the little lawyer left the minor details of nourishment and instruction to less important personages. But he did not relax in the prosecution of his inquiries relative to the boy's origin, and the cause of his being so shamefully abandoned. Advertisements were from time to time published in the leading newspapers, but without effect. Not a single circumstance transpired—not the slightest information could be obtained that threw the faintest gleam of light upon the subject.

Of all, however, who patronised our hero, none was more truly valued by him than the landlord of the Roaring Boreas, who at intervals regularly loaded himself with cakes and toys, and having got under way from his snug moorings, made his voyage, and discharged his cargo, to the great delight of the consignee. No nobleman's son could be more plentifully supplied with amusement, and guns, whistles, trumpets, ships, drums,—in short, a little of everything strewed the house. Strangers admired the fine features of the lad; his story was a thousand times repeated; and whilst the unusual name caused mirth, the occurrence itself excited a lively interest in his welfare.

On his return to Plymouth, Will Blocks obtained leave, and his first visit was to his old friend Joe Breeze, now become a man of no small consideration, and master of extensive property, that entitled him to several votes as a freeholder in the counties of Devonshire and Cornwall, as well as for some borough towns in both. With party politics Joe was totally unacquainted. The distinction between Whigs and Tories he never could understand, but "church and king" was everything in his estimation; and he who could shout it longest

and loudest carried off his vote. Still he would not personally interfere to influence those who were in some measure under his control. No persuasion could induce him to discharge his tenants for not going the same way with himself. He used to say, "every man ought to know best the trim of his own craft, and which tack she was most likely to make the longest board on." Will met with a cordial reception from his old shipmate, though somewhat puzzled at his flourishing speeches and assumptions of dignity. Yet they overhauled their recollections of past times—mixed their grog half-and-half—gave a sea-sigh to the memory of the departed, and then the hardy tar "hauled his wind" to see his young protegé. Sincere and warm were his expressions of delight when he found him a bold strapping boy of five years, full of frolic and fun; and honestly did he declare his gratitude and satisfaction when the evidences of kind and excellent treatment were so manifest before him. Young Ten was equally pleased with his benefactor, whose pockets were crammed with all sorts of presents suited to infantile amusement; and our hero considered that there was only one man in the world of greater consequence, and that was Joe Breeze.

The interviews which Will Blocks had with Mr. Hector and Mr. Brief were more of a professional character than otherwise. To the former he made the most sincere acknowledgments of thankfulness, conjoined with a handsome present; and to the latter he gave fresh powers to receive a considerable addition of prize-money. He then rejoined old Joe, and they passed the remainder of the day together in jollity and joy—Joe assuring his old messmate and pupil that, "by the earnest persuasions of his wife, he meant to resign the command of the Roaring Boreas, and lay up in ordinary for the rest of his days; but, somehow or other, when it came to the point, neither of them could make up their determination to quit a craft that had been so lucky."

Another week, and Will Blocks was again at sea, in a smart frigate bound to the East Indies; but soon after his departure, an important change took place in the future prospects of our hero. The person to whose immediate care he had been confided was attacked by apoplexy, and in a few hours became a corpse. Ten-thousand had been very much attached to the woman who had behaved to him with a kindness truly maternal; and this bereavement was doubly felt by the child, and it may, in

fact, be considered as his first experience of real sorrow. Joe Breeze, Mr. Brief, and Mr. Hector held a consultation relative to the future disposal of the boy, which terminated in the worthy clergyman, with the sanction of his amiable lady, receiving him into his own family, a competent amount for board and education being appropriated to defray the expense.

This was on all accounts a happy improvement for the child, as Mr. Hector had none of his own, and yet was extremely fond of children. He was also a man of deep research and extensive knowledge; and as he found his pupil acute and intelligent, so he contrived every opportunity to impress upon his mind the advantages of religion, whilst he imparted the necessary instruction to improve the intellect. The boy venerated his kind preceptor, and his still kinder wife; he was diligent and attentive to his studies, was affable in his temper, and always desirous to please; and in his new sphere he very soon gained the estimation of all who favoured him with their notice.

Years passed on, and the boy grew tall of his age, extremely handsome, with a strong robust frame, and enjoying excellent health His predilection was evidently for the ocean,

and his bias received additional weight from frequent conversations with old Joe Breeze, whose tales of distant climes and the joys (!) of a sea life had so won upon his admiration, that he longed to become a sailor. Mr. Hector, finding that the bent of his inclination was the result of principle, and not mere boyish frivolity, immediately directed his mind to those studies which would be most useful to him in his future career as a navigator, and, to the great satisfaction of the teacher, the pupil exceeded even his most sanguine expectations, by the readiness with which he became a proficient in mathematics, and its appliances to practical navigation and astronomy: he also imbibed a good classical knowledge, could talk and write the French language fluently, wrote a free bold hand; but that which engrossed most of his attention was drawing and planning; and in these departments he greatly excelled, so that at twelve years of age, through the judicious management of Mr. Hector, and the noble stimulus he applied, young Blocks had made further progress in his education than most lads at fifteen and sixteen. The fact was, that, though treated kindly, and even with parental feeling, he had not been pampered and spoiled by mistaken indulgence.

Mr. Hector was only a poorly paid curate, in humble circumstances, devoted to the sciences, and ardently attached to those pursuits which, whilst they exalt the understanding above the grovelling things of earth, at the same time but too frequently keep the body without the comforts, and sometimes even the necessaries of life. Still he was happy in the affections and piety of his wife—happy in the faithful discharge of his ministerial functions, and uttered no complaints when circumstances pressed heavy against him.

About this time Mr. Hector received an offer of a more eligible curacy, at a village some seven or eight miles distant from Plymouth, but situated near the coast. It was a lovely spot, just suited for quiet retirement from the obtrusive world, and thither, after another consultation with the lawyer and the landlord, young Ten-thousand accompanied his instructor. Mr. Brief was punctual in his quarterly payments, but, as some considerable time had elapsed since any information had been received of the whereabouts of Will Blocks, he suggested the propriety of preparing the youth as early as possible for the busy bustling of active life; for though he had yet remaining plenty of money to go on with,

still it would be preferable to retain some little store to fit the lad out and to assist him in his future operations. Old Joe fully acquiesced in the proposition, which was not lost on Mr. Hector, who devoted all the energies of his mind to advance the knowledge of his pupil.

In the neighbourhood of the parsonage stood Wellmore Hall, the country seat of a retired merchant, who had made an ample fortune, principally through his connexion with a rich trader in Holland. One privilege of the clergy, however poor in circumstances they may be, is admission into the best society, as far as rank and riches take the precedence; and in the habitations of the wealthy they are generally admitted as respected guests, which may be adduced as an evidence that learning, conjoined with piety, is esteemed by the aristocracy of England. How far this deduction may be correct, I shall leave to others to determine, having in my narrative to deal principally with facts. Certain it is that Mr. and Mrs. Hector at all times met with a gracious reception at the Hall; and Ten-thousand, on account of his short but eventful history, as well as his amiable qualities, became a universal favourite, but more especially among the junior branches of the family; and one of the French noblesse,

who had been driven by the Revolution from his home, having found an asylum under the roof of Mr. Wellmore, was so pleased with his knowledge of the French language, that he took great pains to perfect him both in grammatical construction and pronunciation, till he had attained a perfect mastery, and could converse with all the ease and fluency of a native.

The daughter of the Dutch merchant was also on a visit to the Hall, and being about the same age as our hero, they pursued their studies together. Ten-thousand experienced unusual pleasure in associating with the pretty Hollander, and he took great pains in teaching her English, whilst he endeavoured through her means to obtain some knowledge of that semi-barbarous tongue the Dutch. Eugenia and Blocks were almost inseparable companions: for, after the time devoted to instruction, they ranged the summer-fields; he plucked the wild flowers to decorate her hair; he told her of his early history, and the longings of his heart to ascertain who his parents were; in short, he had found one to whom he could unburthen all the griefs and cares of his mind, and she would throw her arms round his neck in childish sympathy, soothe

his distress, kiss away his tears, till he was once more tranquil and happy.

No tidings whatever had been heard of the benevolent tar who had rescued the orphan of the ocean from destruction, and had also carried out the god-like principle of charity by appropriating a great portion of his prize-money to the maintenance of the child. Apprehensions were entertained that he was no more, and though the lad preserved but a feeble recollection of the worthy seaman, yet his grief was unfeigned at the thoughts of losing one to whom he was so much indebted. "My good lad," said Mr. Hector to him one day after they had completed their usual studies,—"my good lad, you are already acquainted with every circumstance connected with your situation, and much as it will grieve me to part with you, yet a sense of justice to yourself impels me to prepare you for entering on the great world. You have selected the life of a sailor for that which you wish to pursue. There is the same Providence at sea as on shore, and the hand that was outstreched in mercy when you were cast a helpless infant on the turbulent waters can shield you in the midst of dangers calculated to appal the mind

of man, although they manifest the power of the Creator. I have, under the blessing of Heaven, endeavoured to instil right precepts to guide you in your course amongst the many worthless, — no, I will not call them worthless, for every soul is precious in the eye of the Almighty,—but I will say, the many irreligious and profane with whom you must necessarily hold companionship. I have also imparted such grounds of instruction, as far as my poor scholarship will admit, to render you not wholly ignorant of the sciences; it is yourself that must build a substantial superstructure upon both, and may the Omnipotent who arrayeth the lily of the field and feedeth the young ravens when they cry be your friend and father!" The good man became too affected to proceed for some minutes, and the lad, taking his hand, bathed it with tears. At length more calmly he proceeded. "Yes, my boy, the Great Being himself has said, 'I will be a father to the fatherless:' do you then place yourself as a humble and dutiful son beneath the shadow of his wing. To-morrow Mr. Brief will be here to make arrangements for the future. The service of your country is a service of honour and credit, and, come what may, though silver I have none,

and gold I have none, yet what I have you shall have share with me, and at all times consider my residence your home. Go now, my young friend, commune with your own heart, and seek counsel of your Maker, that you may be directed to that which is best." He pressed the hand of the agitated boy and left the room.

The youth obeyed the advice of his kind preceptor, and kneeling down, his aspirations were addressed to the throne of grace. He then walked out in the glorious sunshine, and beheld all nature smiling around him. A feeling of confidence assured his heart and filled it with pleasing tranquillity. At the borders of the grounds attached to the Hall he was joined by Eugenia, and together they strolled through the village and along the main road, conversing on the painful prospect of soon parting, when they were accosted by a remarkably noble-looking man in naval uniform, who inquired the way to the Parsonage. The lad's heart warmed at the sight of the cloth, and he immediately proffered his services to show him the way.

"Ten-thousand Top—I mean thanks, young gentleman," returned the officer, taking off his hat and bowing: "and you too, my pretty

lass, will lend a hand to tow a poor tar into safe moorings, eh?"

"Yes, mynheer," replied the smiling girl, "we sall be too moosh happy for do you very good."

"Well, I'm bless'd," exclaimed the officer, "if this arn't curious anyhow, to be called 'mynheer' on the coast of Devonshire!"

"She is a native of Holland," said the lad, rather offended at the seaman's bluntness; "but what of that?"

"I hopes no offence, young gentleman," rejoined the officer: "I'm sartin none was meant. You're English, howsomever, by your running your guns out so quick in defence of a petticoat. That's right; never see a female with a signal of distress, and clap your glass to a blind eye."

"This way, sir," said the appeased lad, turning to the left off from the road. "We must go down the lane; it is the pleasantest way."

"Shape your own course, and I'll follow in your wake, young gentleman," returned his companion; "but I'm thinking it's what they calls one o'the mummylies of life that an ould tar who has been boxing about to all parts of the world at sea shouldn't be able to

work a traverse for a few miles ashore without a pilot. Howsomever, it arn't in reason that I should know the bearings and distance of a port so well as those who were born in it."

"I was not born here," rejoined the youth somewhat mournfully. "Indeed, I do not know where I was born."

"What! no one to keep your reckoning?" exclaimed the officer, looking earnestly in his face. "Well, them is hard lines anyhow. Pray do you know the parson as I am going to see?"

"Mr. Hector?" returned the lad, smiling at the question. "Yes, I know him very well: he is one of my best friends."

"And mayhap you may remember a child he has under his convoy," continued the other · "a pretty bold little craft named ——."

"Ten-tousand, come here; get one petit bouton for me," called Eugenia, who was somewhat in the rear.

"Eh? what?" exclaimed the officer, stopping short and catching hold of the lad's arm. "By what name did she hail you?"

"By my proper name," replied the boy firmly,—"Ten-thousand!—"

"—Topsail-sheet Blocks," added the other, interrupting him impatiently.

"Yes, you are perfectly right, sir," answered the youngster. "Unhappily I know no other."

"You? young gentleman! you the child I left in short duds a year or two ago?" exclaimed the officer, his eyes twinkling with pleasure. "You the babby that I stowed away in my breast when the wind and waves had marked you for their prey? Give us your fin, my hearty; there's no needs to say what cheer, for, by the look on you, you've had snug moorings and been well victualled. And now, my boy, what d'ye say to washing your hands in salt water?"

The youth contemplated the appearance of the person who thus addressed him with gratified pleasure. There was an open candour on his countenance and frankness in his manner well calculated to make their way to the heart of the young. But when he heard him acknowledge himself as having known him in infancy, his pulse beat quicker, and sensations of hope and alarm rushed alternately across his mind. The individual who had rescued him from death was a foremast man, the person by his side was an officer, and Ten-thousand was not sufficiently acquainted with the regulations of the service to know that the warrant-officers

are selected from amongst the seamen; yet an idea that he was in the presence of his benefactor strongly suggested itself, and warm feelings of respect and gratitude kindled in his breast.

"You mention circumstances connected with my infancy," said he, rather agitated by conflicting emotion. "Will you do me the favour to tell me if you are a friend of Mr. Blocks?"

"Why, as for the matter of being his friend, I can't disactly say," returned the other, laughing with gratification and good humour. "We've sailed together many a long year, and I was with him when he picked you up in the punt in Plymouth Sound. You were another guess sort of a consarn, I'm thinking, then, to what you are now. Why, Lord love the boy, how he is grown!"

"I had hoped," said the lad, rather chagrined at what he deemed a disappointment, "to have found in you the kind patron who has enabled me to be what I am. You're not Mr. Blocks, then?"

"You never axed me," responded the officer more seriously. "Yes, my lad, I am Will Blocks; and let it be what the larned calls a maxim with you, whenever you hails a craft, to do so boldly, without backing and

filling in your speech: — I am Will Blocks, and right glad am I to come alongside of you again!"

"You are promoted, then?" said the delighted boy; whilst Eugenia, comprehending the scene, took hold of the seaman's rough hand between her little delicate fingers.

"Why, for the matter o' that," returned the other, "it 's not always merit meets with its proper reward, or some people might be a little higher in the sarvice: but, to satisfy you, young gentleman, I am now gunner of his Majesty's ship Scratchee, Captain Joseph Sydney Yorick; and I hopes soon to have the satisfaction of seeing on you rated on her quarter-deck, as stiff as a midshipman, as the saying is. But, come along! let 's make sail to the clargyman. I 'm bless 'd if I arn't as happy as a prince!"

Mr. Hector received his visitor with his accustomed politeness and urbanity, and felt extremely pleased to find him in a superior station; and though he could not but contemplate the parting with his pupil without deep regret, yet, as knowing it was requisite for his future welfare, he hoped that the lessons he had received would not easily be lost sight of.

"Muster Brief will bring up in your road-

stead this afternoon," said the gunner. "He wanted me to keep my anchors down and come out in his one-horse jigamaree thing; but, thinks I to myself, 'I don't know the build or rig of the consarn, and two or three hours are somut in a man's life;' so I e'en made sail alone.—But, Lord love the lad!" looking at Ten-thousand, "why it seems but yesterday that I puckelowed him out o' the punt and slued him up, starn foremost, to the first leftenant. And now!—Well, God A'mighty bless yer reverence, and you, my lady! — when one on you is moored in heaven, may the other be lashed alongside, for your kindness to the babby!"

A light cart at this moment drove up to the gate, at the bottom of the garden, and a young man alighted and rang the bell.

"Who or what can this be, my dear?" said Mr. Hector, addressing his wife, and then reading the name upon the cart, 'George Mason, Wine Merchant, Plymouth,'—"I know no such person."

"He has perhaps brought you a letter from the doctor," replied his wife. "The vehicle often passes this way, and he may be one of the doctor's parishioners."

"True my dear," returned her husband

" but he is handing down baskets, and old Grace is receiving them as if they were indeed designed for me. There must be some mistake."

" No mistake whatsomever, yer reverence," said Blocks respectfully. " I thought the lubber had discharged his cargo afore this, seeing as he promised to be under weigh an hour before I started. The case is just as this here, yer ladyship: — Thinks I to myself, ' What's life without a drop o' grog,' all in the middleum way, in course, yer reverence; but then, thinks I, ' the clargy don't drink grog;' so Muster Brief recommends me to a fair-dealing chap, and it 's no mistake in the world, but all your own, in the regard o' drinking the boy's health and prosperity."

The servant, who had been called, old Grace, entered, and addressing her master, said, " There 's three dozen o' port, sir—three dozen o' sherry, six bottles o' brandy, and six bottles o' rum."

" And I 'll just trouble you for one on 'em, and a corkscrew," interrupted Blocks, " seeing that the dust 's got down my throat in walking."

" There 's a box too—and a bag—and a leg o' mutton and a goose — and a couple o' ducks

— and a side o' bacon—and tea and sugar, split-peas, and bacca, and a bottle of milk, and —"

"Ay, ay, lovey! there's a little sumut of everything, from a mould candle to a mouse-trap," said Blocks, laughing. "Why, Lord love your heart! do you think, after sarving his Majesty, man and boy, for five-and-thirty years, I don't know what 's wanting in a mess? But hand us in the box, my beauty!—Though for the matter o' that, there 's no occasion to give you the trouble, seeing as I 'm the ouldest and the ugliest, and best able to do it myself."

He was, however, spared his labour this time, as the young man who drove the cart brought in the box and "hoped all was right."

"Ay, ay, my hearty! all square," returned Blocks, giving him some silver: "and mayhap his reverence here will order you a glass o' grog." Grace brought in the bottle and the corkscrew. "Or avast! have I your leave, yer reverence, he shall have a taste o' this."

Mr. Hector gave his ready assent; but the young man stopped the operation of the tar by saying, "I would rather have a drink of home-brewed ale, if you please."

"Every man to his liking, my hearty!" exclaimed Blocks, whilst the worthy curate directed Grace to supply his wants. The gunner filled a good-sized tumbler nearly half full of rum, and then pouring in the water from a jug held nearly two feet above it, there was an appearance of effervescence, but no time was allowed to test the fact, for the whole was out of sight at a draught. The gunner smacked his lips with a gusto, and drawing a long breath, uttered as he put down the empty glass, "Never make two bites of a cherry;—won't yer reverence try it?"

"Not now, my kind and excellent friend," answered the minister: "after dinner I will indulge in a glass of wine with you. But your generosity has been over-taxed; we have done nothing to merit such attention."

"Arn't you, though!" exclaimed the gunner, rising from his chair, the blood rushing to his face, for he had given the words their literal meaning. "Then all I've got to say is—" his eye rested on the youth—he paused a moment—smiled with pleasure—his placidity returned, and ejecting a stale quid from the window, he uttered the word "gammon."

The clergyman and the lady were surprised at the change in the manner of their visitor;

but the former soon divined the cause. "I accept your bounty readily, Mr. Blocks," said he, "and the more so as I feel that it has all been kindly meant, as a token of your esteem."

"You're working the right traverse now, yer reverence," returned Blocks, reseating himself and casting a wistful eye at the bottle. "It's real Jemakee that, but I thinks there's a twang of the cask." He filled another half-glass. "Let the box alone, you young scamp!" added he laughingly to Ten-thousand, who with Eugenia was wondering what it could contain. The parson and his lady turned their heads towards the party addressed, and the grog disappeared.

"Shall I cook the mutton, ma'am, or the ducks?" inquired Grace, opening the parlour-door. "There's a bag of turnips, and plenty of sage and inyons. If they live so well at sea, Muster Officer, I should like to be a sailor."

"Barring the breezes, ould girl," returned Blocks: "them short duds ud look queerish skimming aloft to take in a reef. May I stand caterer, yer reverence?" Mr. Hector bowed. "I ax pardon; it's the lady as I should ask."

"Make yourself quite at home, Mr. Blocks," said Mrs. Hector; "order and do as you please."

"Thanky, thanky, yer ladyship," uttered the gunner. "Then I say, my beauty, let 's have both on 'em: and if you wants any help in the cooking way, such as a dow-boy or two, or a fathom o' plum duff, why then just give me a hail: my long togs arn't made me forget I've had my day to be cook o' the mess; and though it wouldn't be ship-shape for an officer of my rank to——But there I 'm ashore, and, Lord love your heart! I means to enjoy myself."

Old Grace chuckled and simpered at being called a beauty by "Muster Sailor-officer," and when her mistress accompanied her from the room to forward the arrangements, she exclaimed, "Well, ma'am, I remember when I held you in my arms a babby, and that 's some few years ago; but never in my life before did I behold a more handsomer and properer a man than Muster Blocks."

The box was opened. On the top were scattered three or four hundred full-grown "capstan-bar cheroots," as the gunner termed them—then came a piece of beautiful Bandanna handkerchiefs, and under this a handsome palampoo. Next appeared a delicate dress of China silk, and another of crape, enclosed in which were a large cornelian necklace, two small Chi-

nese josses or idols, and a quantity of choice spices that diffused a delightful fragrance, two bottles of real otto of roses, and several other things; and beneath all was the skin of a young tiger, with a number of pieces of cornelian, for shirt-buttons, bracelets, watch-seals, &c. The young people examined everything with delight; and, if the truth must be told, the older folks were equally gratified.

"They're all your own, yer ladyship," exclaimed the gunner as Mrs. Hector quitted the room, "except the josses, and them I brought for his reverence."

"'Man makes a god and worships him," uttered Mr. Hector, taking up one of the hideous images and inspecting it. "What blindness!—I may say, what madness! The Heathens bow down to such a thing as this.—But stop,—let me be just! Do not Christians, and well-educated Christians too, erect altars in their hearts, and offer incense to idols of their own creation? And need inquiry be made as to which is most offensive to the Deity?"

"Why, as to the matter o' that, yer reverence," responded the truth-loving seaman, who supposed the question was literally put to himself,—"as to the matter o' that, it ud puzzle

my edecation a bit to decide, because why—there's only One as can sarche the heart and knows the reckoning it keeps. Now, I arn't had much bringing up in the way of parson-craft; but yet I thinks an Ingin or a Nigger arn't much 'sponsible rationality in the regard a knowing a pulpit from a wash-deck tub—and the ignoramuses with nothing to kiver their nakedness except an —— clout—saving the lady's presence; though, being of the mynheer build, mayhap she mayn't understand me.—I'm saying, yer reverence, that being nothing but naked dark-skinned ignoramuses, barring the article afore named, it ud seem a comical sight to 'em, if they were pitched into one of our churches, to see a man in a shirt stuck up aloft like Jack in a box, and——"

"It would—it would, my friend!" interrupted Mr. Hector, who feared that the plain-spoken seaman might possibly utter something derogatory to the sacred office. "Every nation has its peculiarities and superstitions; and it is worthy of remark, that particular classes have particular objects either of veneration or alarm. The sailors, for instance, have a strange superstition relative to the rat."

"There's no superstition in that, yer rever-

ence," answered Blocks solemnly; "it 's all as true as gospel. I see'd it once myself, and, if you 've no objections, I'll just tell you all about it."

"It shall have my profoundest attention," said the clergyman, seating himself near the gunner; and, despite his remarks on superstition, he manifested an eager desire to hear the story.

"Well, then, yer reverence," said the gunner, apparently unconsciously, and from the mere force of habit, mixing himself another glass of grog, "I'll just overhaul the consarn a bit in my own mind, so as to make everything ship-shape. Because why? A man's memory is more like the log-board than a log-book—a rough rub with a hand-swab wipes away the chalk from the one, whilst the other keeps its reckoning to the last; and I don't happen to have any moneyrandums of what took place." He passed his horny hand over his head, either to quicken his intellect or to smooth his hair, rubbed his eyes, twitched his tail over his shoulder, tasted his brewing, and added with solemnity, "I'm thinking, yer reverence, that what you call superstition about them there rats is sumut of a different natur. Now, a seaman 's a sort o' water-rat, and there's a kind of an *inkstink*

about 'em both; though in the regard o' the four-legged creaturs, not having the gift o' reason, the Creator has seen fit to bestow a matter o' knowledge that the tar doesn't possess. And it's the same with most hannimals; for whilst man works his traverse by book-larning and figures, the hannimals have a way of their own that ud put a philosopher to the blush."

"Very true, my friend—very true," answered the clergyman; "the unerring Wisdom that framed all things and called them into being has indeed bestowed a wonderful instinct where reason is denied. Indeed, it has long been a matter of doubt, whether some animals—particularly the elephant and the dog—have not a glimmering of reasoning faculties."

"Mayhap so, yer reverence — mayhap so," returned the gunner, "and I've sometimes thought the same of the Niggers;—but I arn't much skilled in the matter. Howsomever, you shall hear what I've got to say about the rats."

The deepest attention prevailed. Ten-thousand and the little Dutch girl sat down eagerly to listen, and after again taking a pull at his grog, Mr. Blocks commenced. "It's likely yer reverence has heard the fag-end of a song what says,

There 's a sweet little cherub sits perch'd up aloft
To look out for the life of poor Jack.'

—Well, all I got to say is, that no bishop or commander-in-chief among the clargy could ever take a truer aim—text, I mean, from which to spin his sarmon, than them there lines. At the peace of 1762, I was discharged from the ould Valiant, seventy-four, Captain Duncan, after taking the Havanna, which cost us many a brave fellow's life for nothing, as the place was soon afterwards given up again. But I'm saying, there I was discharged because they'd no use for me just then; and as I never had any very kindly liking for the shore whilst there was a bit of timber afloat, I ships myself in a barque as was fitting out off Wapping, bound to Canada, which had just then been turned over by parchment articles to England. Well, after taking in our cargo, we drops down to Deptford, and lashed alongside an empty East Ingeeman to wait for the morning tide. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and being only a youngster, I was ordered by the mate to look out on deck all the first watch, to see that no picarooning thieves laid their grapplin hooks on what didn't belong to them. Now, I 'd been brought up in a sarvice where obedience was always made the test of duty; though,

for the matter o' that, them as were slack in stays had their way freshened by a bull's ——, saving the presence of the ladies: — so I walks the deck now and then, looking over the bows and starn, and at last thinks I to myself I'll e'en go and have a peep aboard the Ingeeman; so I clambers up her side, for her gangway laid like the wall of a church above us, and when I peeped over everything was as plain as broad daylight — her decks were all clear, there warn't so much as a rope-yarn to be seen in the way of gear; but there was a sort of skreeling and skrimmaging about the capstan that puzzled me, so I gets into the main chains and looks through the quarter-deck port, and there I saw about a dozen rats almost as big as young donkeys."

"They must have been monsters indeed, my friend," said Mr. Hector, looking at the grinning youth, who was all eagerness to hear.

"Well, well, they mightn't be quite so large as young donkeys—indeed, I didn't say they were," uttered the gunner, rather impatient at the interruption; "but they certainly were the largest I ever did see; and one of 'em was seated on the combing of the after-hatchway, whilst the rest were standing or

moving about and kicking up a precious bobbery of squealing and screeching. 'My eyes!' thinks I, 'but here's a council o' war going on;' and the fellow on the combing gets up on his hind legs, much after the fashion of a kangaroo, and he steadies himself by his out rigger, and I 'm blessed but he was a rattler! so he comes down off his perch, and they all turned to scrambling about the decks, and some on 'em runs down the head-ropes aboard of the barque. 'Yo hoy!' says I to myself, 'but that won't do — anything but a rat for a shipmate!' And so I goes cautiously along by the side steps; but either they didn't see me or didn't mind me, for up they went again, and one on 'em got the eend of a ball o' spun-yarn in his mouth, and he whips through the port with it, and screeched out like blue murder. Up comes another with a piece of ould canvass, followed by a third with as much oakum as he could carry. 'Well,' thinks I to myself, 'what can these fellows be going at? — howsomever, I won't disturb 'em, anyhow;' for I wanted to see what they meant to do. So, yer reverence, they lays the gear down upon the deck — all but the eend o' the spun-yarn, which a rat that did not move about much held on by — and off they

starts again in a body, down into the barque, and they drags a quantity of shakings and all the loose stuff as they could pick up just under the Ingeeman's port. After this, they returns to the chap as was houlding on, and one on 'em takes up the slack o' the spun-yarn about four inches away from the other's head, and leads him to the edge of the portsill, and then it struck me, from the yarns I 'd heard about such varmin, that the ould chap was blind. Well, next they brings the canvass and spreads it; and then they laid a tier of the oakum, and the ould blind un stretches himself out on top of it, and they lapped him up snug. 'Well, I 'm blow'd,' thinks I, 'but that 's doing on it, anyhow!' though even I couldn't exactly make up what they were after. But, my eyes! they rattled off the spun-yarn from the ball till they 'd got a matter of half-a-dozen fathoms, when they passes the eend through three holes as they 'd made in the canvass, and doubles the parts so as to middle 'em at the ould rat. Five or six on 'em stretched the spun-yarn along the deck so as to make straight the line, and a fellow claps his starn against the ould un in the canvass and backs him off in style. As soon as he was clear, the others walks up with the standing parts,

and lowers him down into the barque in no time. ‘ Oh—oh, my chaps,’ says I to myself, ‘ is that your fun !—what, you ’re for emigrating to Canada, are you ! But I ’m blessed if you shall work that traverse just now, at any rate !’ So I jumps down and catches hould of a broomstick; but they ’d all started afore I could get to ’em, some under the booms, and some down the fore-hatch way—even the ould fellow had made a shift to get out of his slings and was off. I told the second mate next morning, and showed him the consarn, for I was afraid to say anything about it to the skipper lest he might be angry at my letting such passengers aboard. The second mate laughed, and said ‘ it was a sign of good luck, for them sort o’ cattle always knew a tight ship and what sort of a voyage she was to make.’ And sure enough we ’d a beautiful passage to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and so we went up the river and delivered our cargo at Quebec. But the rats had sarved out provisions among ’em — not being over nice where they got it, and there was a Flemish account amongst the cabin stores. Well, they got to smoking ’em out; but, Lord love you ! they cared no more for the smoke than I do for this glass :” and the gunner took a steady pull at his grog. “ Then they tried

other schemes," exclaimed he, "but it wouldn't do, and 'Mind my words,' says the second mate, 'we're all right as long as they'll stick by us.' The skipper gets into a passion; 'I can't think where the thieves have come from,' says he; and you may be sure I didn't tell him, for it warn't very safe in them times for a foremast man to pull athwart hawse of his captain, seeing as there was a slave-trade going on with the Whites as well as the Niggers."

"You don't mean to say that they sold Europeans?" said Mr. Hector in a tone of surprise and doubt.

"Ropeans, or not Ropeans," returned the gunner, "it mattered not what was the calling or the colour, if money was bid, money was taken, and the poor devil — I beg pardon, yer reverence — the onfortunate fellow — was sent off into the country, where he'd small chance of getting away. There was many a deep trick played at that time in England to get rid of troublesome customers; — they called 'em apprentices, but it was ould Bellzebub's claw as signed the indentures."

"I have read of such things," responded Mr. Hector, "but I did not altogether believe them."

"It's true, yer reverence; and when I've

finished about the rats, why, mayhap, if you've no objections, I'll just overhaul a few *antidotes* from the log of memory on that there score."

"You interest and instruct me, Mr. Blocks," returned the clergyman. "I shall be most happy to hear you, — for those that go down to the sea in ships, as the Psalmist says, do indeed see wonders."

"And the gentleman says right too," assented Blocks, "let him have been in what sarvice he will — for he must have washed his hands in salt water to have found it out correctly. But, in regard o' the rats, the skipper was puzzled what to do, till one day he brings off a bag, and 'mew, mew,' went a tortoiseshell mouser, and she was cast loose to pick up the pickerooning wagabones as had plundered the captain's stores. 'The skipper 's let the cat out o' the bag,' says the second mate; 'but, to my thinking, he 'd better have left her ashore. Howsomever, we shall soon see: if all's square, they 'll stick by us, spite of the skipper's insult; but if we 're a doomed craft, they'll want no cat to rouse 'em out, — rats never stay by a sinking ship.' Well, yer reverence, there was now and then a bit of a squall atwixt the two — that 's the cat

and the rats; but puss didn't do much in the way of man-handling 'em, though she made two or three squeak for their lives."

"Vot a moosh long tale!" said Eugenia, growing rather weary of such continued imposed restraint upon her tongue.

"It 's about rats, my precious!" responded Blocks, "and so you must make all due allowance for the length of their *tales*.—Well, yer reverence, one day, after we 'd made a clean hold, we hauled alongside of a jetty, just to examine our bottom at low water; and there was a plank launched out from the ship's side to the quay, for a gangway ashore. It was mid-day, yer reverence, the people were getting their dinners, when the second mate hails us below. 'They're off!' says he; 'young uns and ould uns, there they go!—they 've made their calculations, and worked up the dead-reckoning; and now the skipper may send his cat after 'em as soon as he pleases. I thought it ud be so; there they all go! Will, come and bid good-b'ye to your friends.' I jumped up the hatchway, yer reverence, and there I saw about a score o' rats walking leisurely along the plank to the jetty; and one on 'em was blind and had got a bit of rattan in his mouth, and another was lead-

ing him by it. 'There they go, Will!' says the second-mate; 'there they go, holus bolus, stock and fluke: and now the skipper may cross out my name from the ship's articles as soon as maybe's convenient.' 'Hadn't we better try and catch one or two of 'em?' says I: 'we can make a cage to keep 'em in——' 'And larn 'em to sing,' says he: 'that ud be very like a whale. No, no, my boy, there 'd be no use in stopping 'em against their wills, for that ud be combustion—and combustion arn't of one's own accord, you know.' Well, yer reverence, off they went, blind un and all; and when the skipper comes aboard, several of the people asked for their discharge. 'Why, you're shipped for the voyage,' says the captain, 'and must go back in the Jessy, or not at all. But what makes you want to leave?' So they told him about the rats, and he called 'em a set of d— fools—saving yer clergyman's presence—and ordered 'em forud: but they all seemed detarmined to run any risk rather than go to sea in the craft. Well, at low-water we examines the bottom, and everything seemed tight and sound enough; but still the people warn't by no manner o' means satisfied, in the regard of the disembarkation of the rats; and after we had hauled off, and by the time

we were ready to sail again, most of 'em had contrived to slip their cables out of the skipper's way. Howsomever, the second-mate was a bit of a dare-devil happy-go-lucky sort of a chap, and says he, 'I tell you what it is, Will, the skipper may laugh and call it all nonsense, but I'm blow'd if we arn't regularly in for a sneezer—and he may log it down, if he likes, that I say so. What 'll be the upshot of the thing? why, we've no traverse-tables as we can find the bearings and distance by; but as sure as my mother had me christened by the ugly name of Jack, so sure sumut ull happen. But never strike your colours, my boy, whilst there's a shot in the locker; never say die whilst there's a ray of courage in your heart. I won't desart the skipper, anyhow, come dog, come devil,'—saving your clargy's presence; but it's just as Jack said it,—'come dog, come—' the same over again—'I'll have a slap at it. Will you stand by me, my bould un?' Well, yer reverence, I promised I would; and then says he, 'All square, Will; let's have a toothful of grog over it."

Whether this was a mere excuse for filling his own glass, or that, being reminded of the circumstance, he was led to give greater effect to his narrative by way of illustration,—or

whether he acted mechanically,—the motive must remain unknown: certain it is, that a good stiff nor'-wester passed that way where many a good stiff nor'-wester had gone before. He then continued:—"Well, yer reverence, we sailed again about the middle of December,—blowing weather, and as cold as a snow-ball,—and we took our departure from Cape Race with a spanking breeze at nor'-west. 'Where 's yer rats and their mischief now?' says the skipper; but the second-mate never said nothing to him, though says he to me, 'Will, we arn't half-way home yet—he boasts of a dry jacket afore he is out of the water.' Howsomever, we did pretty fair, sometimes fair weather, but mostly foul, till we got about thirty-four west longitude, and then it came on to blow great guns."

"You do not mean literally so?" said Mr. Hector, looking at the young folks.

"Letterally or not," responded the gunner, "it was as heavy a gale as ever I was in; and the barque being deep, the sea made a clear breach over her; though, being mostly timber-laden, we hadn't much fear of Davy Jones's locker, unless she broke up. It lasted a whole week, and our bowsprit and fore and main topmasts went overboard, and there we

laid at the marcy of the winds and waves, —one wetting us through and through every minute, and the other blowing us dry again. The cold was dreadful; we rolled about like a log—the water-casks fetched way and got staved, and provisions began to run short, for the bread was soaked in the briny helement; we couldn't keep a bit of fire to cook by, and some on us had frozen limbs, till at last all got so weak that we could scarcely handle the ropes. We kept a reefed foresel, a main staysel, and a trysel on her; but one night the foresel blew clean out of the bolt-ropes, and we hadn't the power to clear the wreck. Day after day we laid, the wind dead at nor'-east—ice hanging about the rigging—the hould half full of water, and the timber beginning to send fore and aft, so as to threaten to start a butt-end of some of the planks. The skipper fell ill and took to his bed, and very few but the second-mate and myself were able to crawl about out of sixteen persons. We had, all hands, been put on a short allowance of grub, and the wind lulling, the cook was able to light a fire, and we made two or three pretty fair meals, and kept our course; then it fell a stark calm with a heavy swell, and the craft having but little above board to steady her,

walloped in the trough of the sea—put out our fire, and at last rolled away the foremast, which we cut clear. In three or four days' time we caught light baffling winds, and next a steady breeze from the nor'-east; but we could only lay her to under the main-stay-sel. At last, we were reduced to two ounces of bread and a pint of water a man for twenty-four hours, with now and then a little drop of corn brandy. The skipper never left his bed,—indeed he was nearly blind; but the people behaved themselves like men, and were always obedient to command. Daily was our small allowance diminished—hunger and thirst began to make us quarrelsome, and look wolfish at one another; we had only a little water and a few pounds of bread left, when the second-mate at daybreak went on deck, and we heard him shout, 'Sail ho!' and all hands crawled up—even the captain got out of his cot, making sure that deliverance was at hand.—It 's hard lines, yer reverence, to have every day a banyan-day, and scarcely anything to eat in it—hour after hour the stomach ravening for food, and the parched throat for a little water—and shipmates' eyes glaring on you as if they could gnaw your flesh and suck your blood. Many 's the delicious dream I had,

fancying myself at a plentiful feast and enjoying every luxury — drinking clear water from the vagrant stream, or clapping my mouth to the bunghole of a cask—sometimes cutting off rich slices from a roast leg of pork, or making my mark in a rib-bone of beef, and then to wake almost famished —the vision fled, and starvation, with his maddening leer, staring in my face.—Oh, yer reverence, it was horrible—horrible!"

"It must have been, indeed, my worthy friend, overwhelming to the mind, but for the support of that Being whom the winds and waves obey," said the clergyman feelingly. "But the strange sail — the ship that hove in sight—what of her?"

"It warn't a ship—it was a brig," replied the gunner. "She neared us fast, and seeing help so close aboard of us, we consumed our whole remaining stock, except about two gallons of brandy, and two or three of rum, and a cask of wine. Faces that hadn't had a smile on 'em for many days, now again looked cheerful—wrangling ceased, and we congratulated each other on the prospect of being snatched from death. We hoisted a signal of distress at the peak; and the captain sends for us all down into the cabin, and returned thanks to God

A'mighty, in a prayer as would ha' done credit to any archbishop in the sarvice."

"I'm very glad of that," said Mr. Hector: "gratitude to our Maker is the bounden duty of every one. Perhaps, had you prayed sooner, you would have had earlier relief."

"Prayed sooner, yer reverence?" reiterated Blocks in something like amazement. "Well, mayhap it mightn't be praying, according to book larning; but if ever poor devils cried arnestly for marcy, it was the crew of the barque. There warn't much fuss made about it, to be sure; but some on 'em had been sorry blackguards in the way of getting drunk and kicking up sprees ashore, and in course they felt the prickings of conscience as well as the hungry belly, and they were always crying out to be saved. As for the second-mate, he took everything coolly; and I, being but a youngster, was much obligated to him, for many a lift he give me by way of encouragement, to keep soul and body sailing in company: and now, when the brig was not more nor a mile off, and I was just expressing my joy at the thought of soon obtaining relief, he solemnly answered, 'Don't be too expectful, Will; there's no accounting for broken crockery in a squall.'—Well, yer reve-

rence, I felt angry with him, but I didn't never say nothing, for there was always a somut about the man that seemed as if he could see further than other people, and so I held my tongue; but he warn't cheerful like the rest, and his countenance was as gloomy as the dark cloud that forebodes a storm. As the stranger came nigher and nigher, eager expectation increased; and when she passed within hail, heard our deplorable story, and promised to render us help, we tried to cheer, but it was more like the moaning of wind-gusts through the trees in a churchyard, and we resembled spectres rather than men. We couldn't muster strength enough to get our boat out, for the starn-boat had been washed away; so the skipper of the brig said he would send us his, but it wanted a little repairs first. He told us he was short of provisions himself, but he would spare us some bread and water, and whatever he could.—Well, yer reverence, it stirred us up to energy, and, by dint of hard labour, we turned to at the pumps and lightened her of a great deal of water, and should, perhaps, have cleared her, but that all hands became exhausted and were obligated to give in. The stranger brought the wind with him from the eastard; but just as we had knocked off pumping, it

chopped right round to the westard, and he reached away from us. Some thought he was only keeping to windard — others gazed in silence—yet none believed that he would leave us altogether to perish, but they saw him making sail and every hour lessening to the sight. When he came only just to be seen like a dim speck upon the verge of the horizon, then arose wild cries and lamentations; then did disappointment sink into unutterable despair—the mind gave way under the sudden change—the men flew to the liquor and got drunk; and whilst some were praying to the A'mighty for deliverance, others mingled their expressions of distress with oaths and curses. It was a dreadful scene, yer reverence! The second-mate, though a devil-may-care sort of a chap, wouldn't touch the liquor, nor would he let me. He contrived to light a little bit of fire, and mulled some wine, which we shared with the skipper, for the chief-mate was as bad as any of the men; and collecting all the articles we could muster which was likely to appease hunger, there was part of a bullock's hide, about four pounds of candles, and a gallon of lamp-oil, the cat reduced almost to a skeleton, and the pump-leather. Well, the cat was killed and sarved out in equal pieces the

next day; and I declare, yer reverence, I never eat a morsel with more relish in my life than that which I picked from the breast of poor puss. Nor were there wanting remarks about the rats; but nobody said much, for it was a sore place to some on 'em. Howsomever, the wind being westerly and the water more smooth, we got her away nearly before it, stepped the long-boat's mast in the windlass, and hoisted the sail, and the barque travelled along at the rate of three knots an hour, and those who were able to stand took their spell at the helm. This renewed our hopes a little; for if the breeze continued, we were likely to be carried into the track of the West Ingeeman. But, alas! another gale came on from the nor'ard, with hard frost; every eatable was consumed—candles, oil, all were gone, and we passed the long dreary stormy nights of sixteen and seventeen hours in utter darkness, huddled together in the steerage, imploring the A'mighty to help us, yet feeling reckless of existence. Such was our condition about the middle of January, and no one paid the smallest attention to the craft but the second-mate; indeed, had she been laden with any other cargo, nothing would have saved her, but the timber kept her buoyant even after the water had

risen to the lower deck. But it was disheartening and moloncholy, in them dismal and dreadful nights, to hear the dashing of the waves as they broke over us—the moaning of the pent-up wind in the hould—the groaning of the poor craft as she writhed between the seas, and the howling of the gale as it swept above our heads, all mingling in one terrible threat to send us to the bottom: and yet, yer reverence, in the midst of all this, whilst the hand of the A'mighty showed itself in power and punishment, men were setting all warning at defiance by getting beastly intoxicated; and the mate, who ought to have set a good example to the rest, was the worst among 'em. Now, yer reverence, I never yet believed that because one chap might be a d— rogue—saving yer presence—that the Great Being sent a storm just merely to frighten the fellow, because, d'ye mind, it's sarved out to all alike, and there may be a dozen worthy souls to one rascal; but it certainly was curious to hear some of my shipmates confessing and bemoaning their sins—and by their own calculations they had no small share logged down again 'em, and they kept crying out that they were Jonases and should be swallowed up for their wickedness—that the storm was sent to punish

'em: and one wanted the mate to throw him overboard, that the gale might break up. Now, the mate being mad groggy,—or rather mulled winey, for t'other stuff was gone,—catches him up in his arms, and was about to pitch him over the quarter just as if he'd been a dipsy lead; but the second-mate stopped him from committing the murder, and bundled 'em both below again.—It's surprising, yer reverence, how men who are hourly hazarding existence—I say it's surprising to see how hard they hould on by the life-lines, taking in every morsel of slack that they can gather, and getting a severe turn by way of belaying all they can haul in upon. The suffering by famine warn't nothing compared to the dread of death."

"Although we ought at all times to be prepared for our latter end," said the clergyman, "yet it seems to be a wise ordination of Providence that men should place an inestimable value on existence—it is the best gift of the Creator, and once destroyed, is gone for ever."

"Mayhap so, yer reverence," returned Blocks, "for I take it you're better skilled in them things than I can be; but it did seem strange that whilst they were hourly expecting it, and knew it must come some time or other, yet the nearer it approached, the more they

were terrified. I can't exactly explain my meaning, perhaps, only I've felt more uneasiness afore going into action than when we got to hard hammering; and in this here case, aboard the Jessy, the second-mate laid himself down as calmly to sleep as if nothing at all was the matter. And it was really a moloncholy sight to see the poor withering wretches dying by inches, some like moving skeletons, and others with their flesh swelled and bloated as if they'd lived on plenty. At last, there were red eyes and ravening glares, and grinding of the teeth, as they looked upon one another; and the mate having cut his arm with a hatchet, he sucked his own blood, and it made him laugh with such savage fierceness as rendered him more like a devil than a human being: and then he stared at one and stared at another with the eagerness of a famished tiger; but he said nothing, though it was plain enough to be seen what his thoughts were. And they all sat silently clutching their hands, and snatching their breath, as if each had something to communicate, but dared not clothe their thoughts in words—then there was an indistinct muttering of doing the best to save their lives, till it came to a question of—*what was* best?

" 'Here we are, nineteen of us, starving, perishing,' said the mate, who had been drinking more wine and was inflamed: 'if we continue thus a few days longer, what is there before us? Wouldn't it be better for one—' and he stopped a minute or two, for all expected what was coming next, and shuddered, though the very thought made them more eager for food. At length, says he, 'D— all ceremony! one must die, that the rest may live.' —It was a fearful moment, yer reverence: there we were, all but the captain, down in the steerage, hungering for each other's flesh, and none on us knowing which might be the victim. The second-mate said nothing, but the rest kept mumbling about drawing lots, and the carpenter said he 'd a couple of dice as would do to throw; but the second-mate said, 'he 'd be no partner to use the devil's bones when the life of a Christian was the stake.' At last, the chief-mate and two or three others went into the cabin to consult the captain, who wouldn't listen to 'em or have any hand in it, but requested them all to come aft whilst he read the Bible and went to prayers. They said, 'it was of no manner of use, all the prayers in the Psalm-book wouldn't appease their hunger. —they 'd come to the determination of casting

lots, and if he wouldn't give his sanction, they'd do it without,' and returned to the steerage again. So they made all ready, with a dreadful eagerness, as if they wanted to put the matter beyond doubt; and it was agreed that the second-mate should prepare eighteen (for we left the captain out)—eighteen pieces of rope-yarn—sixteen on 'em exactly of equal lengths—one a little shorter, and another a little shorter still. Whoever drew the first lot was to be clear, the second was death, and the third the man who was to do the deed. The bights were to be shoved through a crack in the bulk-head from the steward's store-room, and every one was to draw his yarn. Well, it was done, and all hands were placed in the steerage, with almost bursting eyes looking at what must be a death-warrant to one of them; but when it came to the push, there was a reluctance to draw, and the second-mate, says he, 'My lads, suppose we wait till to-morrow morning afore we proceed any further; —let us leave the lots where they are for to-night, and try what may come to our fishing-gear,'—for we'd had the hooks out several days. 'We've stood it thus far; surely we may weather it out a few hours longer.' But those who had been the most reluctant to draw, now

again became the most eager ; though at last it was agreed to wait over another night. The mate was very much again it; and when it was decided, he made himself mad drunk, quarrelling and fighting with anybody as was near him. At last he struck the carpenter a severe blow, and was knocked down insensible. This conduct seemed worse than all, that at the very time when horrible misfortune was crushing all of us with the same weight, any one should be trying to make the affliction heavier by vengeance against a fellow-sufferer. Darkness came on, and we'd caught no fish, seen no prospect of help, so that another daylight would be the last that was to dawn upon a shipmate—which, was then unknown, though each might fancy it would be himself.—That was a dreadful night, yer reverence—a night of groans and tears, and lamentations; and it was about the close of the first watch that somebody came down below from the upper deck, but nobody axed him any questions or spoke—all hands, except the look-out, were in their berths, thinking of the dreadful deed of the morrow. All at once there was a scuffling in the steerage, and a sort of a gurgling sound like water blowing through a pump; but not a word was spoke,—though two or three heavy

sighs were heard as if a person was trying to keep his heart from rising; but soon all was quiet again, and the men were too much engaged in thinking of themselves to take much notice of anything else. The second-mate and I was to have the middle watch, and the weather was much finer and even warmer than it had been for some time before, and the barque remained pretty steady and quiet. The chief-mate had the first watch; but he warn't on deck when we went up, so we supposed he had gone to his cabin,—for I must tell you he left the steerage when he recovered from the blow which the carpenter had given him. Well, I and the second-mate crouched ourselves together under the trysel, for we couldn't walk, and every now and then one on us looked out to see if we could see anything; and at eight bells—that's four o'clock in the morning, yer reverence,—I went below to rouse out the carpenter to take the morning watch; so I goes to his berth and gives him a shake, but he never took no notice; and then I shakes him again, but still he never answered, and I thought there was a lumpish heaviness about his body as warn't altogether nat'ral or ship-shape, and 'Yo-hoy, ould chips!' says I, 'it 's past eight bells.' Well, finding he warn't inclined to turn

out, I began to suspect there was somut the matter with him, and so I feels up his breast towards his face, and there was a great deal of slimy wet about his shirt-collar; but, oh God! I shall never forget the sensation that came over me when, on feeling his neck, I found that his throat was cut in such a dreadful manner, that his head was more than half severed from his body."

"Horrible! horrible!" said Mr. Hector, shuddering. "'Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him?'—So the poor fellow had destroyed himself?"

"Not by no manner o' means, yer reverence," returned Blocks with solemnity. "But let me go on in my own way, if you please, unless you 're wearying of hearing of so much wretchedness and misery."

"It certainly is anything but a gratifying narrative, Mr. Blocks," responded the clergyman; "but there may be many useful lessons gleaned from it. When I feel dissatisfied at my lot hereafter, I shall recall your sufferings to my mind, and the contrast must fill my heart with gratitude to God. Pray, let me hear the result; and I hope these young folks will treasure what they hear in mind."

"Well, yer reverence," continued the gun-

ner, "when I found that the poor onfortunate carpenter was dead, I didn't make any noise, but I goes up to the second-mate and tells him; and says he, 'Will, say nothing about it below. Come, it's pretty warm here; creep under again, and let 's wait till daylight.' So I stows myself away again: and about eight o'clock, just as light began to struggle against the gloom, we saw the chief-mate come on deck and look carefully and cautiously round him; and he draws a bucket of water, and was going to wash his hands, when my companion gets from under the trysel and goes towards him. 'Watson,' says he, 'you 're a murderer!' Oh, how his eyes glared! and there was damning testimony on his hands and clothes, which were darkly stained with gore. 'How dare you call me by such a name?' says he. 'Because you deserve it,' answers the second-mate: 'it was you who cut poor Davis's throat; and though we may none of us live to bring you to earthly punishment, yet there is a Judge, before whom you will shortly have to appear, whose condemnation will be sure.' 'Leave me to settle that affair,' says Watson: 'but by what right or on what grounds do you tax me with the crime?' 'Your hands are evidence again you,' said the second-mate: 'and let me ax

you whose knife is this?' and he shows the chief-mate's knife as sharp as a razure, and covered with blood. The villain made a snatch at the knife, but the second-mate kept him off; and then Watson took up the hatchet and tried to cut him down, but missed; and they grappled together, and wrestled for mastery, till they got near the starboard chesstree, where the bulwarks had been washed away and the deck was flush out with the sea. The chief-mate was by far the strongest man, and I could see he was dragging his hangtagonist to the side to pitch him overboard; and so I rouses out from under the trysel, hardly knowing what to do, but determined to try and save my friend. So I looks about for something or other to knock Watson down, and I grabs hould of the bar of the companion-hatch; but afore I could get alongside of 'em, the barque gave a roll to starboard—I heard a heavy splash amid the wash of the sea, and in the increasing light saw them in the white foam, still keeping up the deadly strife in the waters. I hailed 'em down in the steerage, to say the mates were overboard; but though I heard them turning out, not a soul came on deck. I hurries as fast as I could to the gangway again, and there they were beneath the surface, still clinging to and

struggling with each other, till they both disappeared; and I fell down in agony, and clung with my arm round the stancheon to keep from being washed away. I felt sick; a dizziness comed over me. I couldn't see for several minutes; but I thought somebody passed their arm over mine, and spoke to me softly and soothingly. It roused me up; I looked, and therew as the second-mate half in-board, and half out, quite exhausted, but houlding on by the stancheon with the hardiness of a last death-grip. With what little strength I had left, I caught up the eend of the maintopsel clewline, and passing it round him, took three or four turns to the stancheon, and then crawls to the hatchway, and begs some of 'em in the steerage to come and help me, but none on 'em would stir; and presently the captain comes up, but he was obligated to go upon his hands and knees, and the second-mate recovering his senses a bit, after a great deal of labour and trouble, we got him aboard and laid him under the trysel. I gave him a little wine; the cook made a shift to light a fire, and in about half-an-hour I saw the men coming on deck with lumps of flesh, which they ate half-roasted, half-raw.—Ate, did I say? They tore it like dogs with their teeth, and quarrelled

and fought to get near the grate. I knew what it was—my very soul loathed it; but, oh, yer reverence, the gnawings of hunger, now heightened by seeing others at a banquet, overpowered all disgust, and going forud, I begged a piece o' the carpenter and made a hearty meal. I carried some to the second-mate, who chewed but did not swallow it, and for a short time we all found ourselves strengthened. It was a dead calm; the sun shone upon us this day, and each took a little warm wine and became more rational. The *remains* of the carpenter were brought on deck; and as there was plenty of salt, some on 'em cut up the flesh, and taking out the bones, it was put into pickle. The skipper wouldn't touch a bit of it, especially as we told him the poor fellow had been murdered. The second-mate was silent as to his manner of escape from the conflict; but we soon had the mystery solved: for as it still remained calm, the body of Watson floated on the surface, with his own knife sticking in his throat. The thing had been done in self-defence. I had witnessed the affray; the dastardly conduct of the chief-mate to the carpenter all conspired in favour of my friend, and he was cordially congratulated on having conquered. Howsomever, we got the

villain alongside, and in a couple of hours the murderer was in the same pickle-cask along with the man he had murdered."

"Strange and wonderful vicissitude!" exclaimed Mr. Hector; "that was indeed astonishing retribution! There is a plain and simple fidelity in your narrative that makes the heart sick."

"Yer reverence had best take a little grog," said Blocks, refilling his glass and drinking. "I feels a little squawmish myself when I thinks about the consarn. Mayhap I 'd better leave off?"

"By no means," returned the clergyman, whose curiosity had been greatly excited. "In fact, I could not rest without becoming acquainted with the means of your deliverance."

"Well, I 'll go on then, if you please," said Blocks, adding more daylight to his grog. "We 'd now plenty of meat, such as it was; but we 'd no water,—and thirst is harder to be borne than hunger. Howsomever, we had still half a cask of wine; and the second-mate got the cook to boil salt water as much as he could, putting the body of a shirt over the pot, which when it became soaked with steam, was wrung into a pannikin, and we got about a quart of brackish stuff in a day. After the death of

the mate, the men became more orderly, and the calm continuing, we contrived by short spells at the pumps to get out a good deal of the water; but at the end of a week it came on to blow again, and the people's limbs swelled and broke out into dreadful wounds, owing to the onnat'ral food they subsisted on. The gale came down heavier and heavier; the sea rolled and raged, and tumbled over us,—washed away the boat from the deck,—indeed, made a clean sweep of everything, pickle-cask and all; so that what was left of the mate and the carpenter was carried into the ocean, where mayhap it may be floating about to this day. Death seemed certain: the poor barque, though a sound craft, could not resist the buffetings and batterings she constantly got, and began to break up. We had no canvass abroad, for it was all blown to shreds, and nobody kept the deck; so that she lay on the waters like a huge coffin containing living skeletons. Sometimes one and then another would drag up their tortured limbs just to look round; but despair began to prevail, and two of our number expired raving mad, whilst the rest were unable to get their bodies upon deck. The hould was filled with water up to the beams, and the timber getting an increase of

weight by suction, we were soon up to our knees in the steerage. Ravening hunger again attacked us. The yarns still remained in the crack of the bulkhead, and often and often the eyes would wander to them as a sort of fixed point. To be sure, there were the dead bodies; but the state in which they died made every one fear a similar malady, and so they were left untouched. The weather moderated, and having nothing to do, the people got talking about home, which they never expected to see again, and wives and children from whom they supposed themselves parted for ever. Oh, what grief and pain, and tribulation and bemoaning, succeeded each other, hour after hour, as memory pictured past enjoyments, which, they said, they thought but little of at the time! and then there were agonizing cries for marcy every now and then bursting out, till the throats got swelled and parched, and the numbers daily grew thinner.—It was indeed dreadful, yer reverence, to look upon the blackening corpses with which we were compelled to hold companionship, and to feel a certainty that we should soon be like them."

"The situation you describe is now present to my imagination," said the clergyman, "and it chills my blood to contemplate it. What,

then, must the reality have been! And yet you were saved—snatched like a brand from the burning."

"No, yer reverence, there warn't no possibility of burning: the craft was too deep in the water and too much soaked to take fire," urged the gunner in reply.

"My allusion was scriptural," answered the clergyman, inclined to smile at the worthy tar's mistake, but restrained by the awfulness of the calamity he was describing.

"Mayhap so, — mayhap so," returned Will quietly; "I can't hould much upon that tack, seeing as I arn't skilled in scriptural delusions; but I don't think none on us would have burned, dry as we all were;" and he took a small supply from his glass. "But there we were, anyhow, day after day getting weaker. One afternoon I made a shift to drag myself into the captain's cabin, just to see how he was weathering it, for nobody hadn't been nigh-hand him for three days."

"And was he all that time alone?" inquired Mr. Hector, who lost not a word of what was uttered, so intensely were his feelings excited.

"Entirely alone!" returned Blocks; "and

when I eased myself off slowly down the companion-ladder and went into the cabin, he laid on his back perfectly still, with his eyes fixed, and his hands folded on his breast; so I thought he had tripp'd his anchor of life, and had made sail for snugger moorings: but when I got alongside of his cot, I saw his lips were moving, and he 'd an open Bible under his hands—he was at prayers. 'I am dying, Will!' said he, as he tried to move on his side; 'a few hours more, and the storms of existence will be over! May the great God be a parent to the fatherless, and the friend of the widow!' His thoughts were lingering on his home. What could I say to him?—there was no hope; but I tould him just to hould on as long as he could, because we were all out'ard-bound as well as himself, and it ud be better for all hands to sail in company, as the skipper, having most larning, would understand which was the best tack to stand on if so be we should happen to have a foul wind. 'Here's a compass and a chart, Will,' says he, houlding up the book; and he overhauled a great many comfortable things, which made quite a lull in my heart. To be sure, I was but young, and I trusted that I hadn't been much of a scamp; but there was a somut onsartin about

death that made me feel quite timbersome. 'There is, indeed, no hope but this, Will,' says he; 'and when I 'm gone, take it to the steerage, and let them read the pages I have turned down.' — Well, yer reverence, just at this moment in comes the second-mate; and there was a wildness in his eye, and he seemed gasping for breath, that both the skipper and I thought he was mad; and as there was somut in his hand which looked like a weapon, I thought, mayhap, hunger had made him crazy, and he would try and kill one of us. The skipper thought so too, for he dropped the Bible, and catches up a pistol that laid by his side to defend himself. But the second-mate stopped short under the skylight, and then we saw that what we had took for a weapon was his spy-glass; and he stood there houlding on by the table, and trembling, till at last he burst out a-crying like a child. 'What is it? speak!' says the skipper; 'don't deceive me — speak!—it is — it is —' 'A sail!' says the second-mate. 'And how is she standing?' eagerly axed the skipper. 'To the best of my belief, towards us,' answers the second-mate. The skipper rose up, and we got him 'pon deck, where every sowl as could move soon mustered — eleven out of nineteen. The stran-

ger was plain enough to be seen ; but our eyes were so bad, that it was a long time afore we could make out what course she was steering, till at last the second-mate declared that she was running to the nor'-nor'-east, and would pass about six miles ahead of us. Now, we knew he couldn't miss but see us; yet, in the state we were in, he might belike take the barque for a desarted wreck, and not come to our aid. — Oh ! yer reverence, how dreadful was the suspense of them horrors ! for the wind was light, and in a couple of hours it would be dark. I can't describe what we suffered ; but I know the captain read a prayer for help, and we all repeated it after him word for word. Well, when we had yet half an hour's good daylight, the stranger was right ahead ; but she came nigher to us than the second-mate calculated upon, as she couldn't then be more than a league off, and we made her out to be a large ship with painted ports and a poop. We tried to shout, but the hollow voices died away sullenly on the waters ; —we hadn't strength to get up the rigging, —we 'd no ensign or signal-halliards to hoist anything by, and we was afeard they wouldn't see us on the deck. Howsomever, the weather was clear, and so the second-mate gets a horn of powder and empties

it on the windlass; and then he takes the captain's pistol and fires into the powder, and it blew up, and the smoke curled thick and high. 'What do you see, Will?' says the skipper eagerly, for he 'd given me his glass and my eye was fixed upon the ship. 'There 's nothing, sir,' says I; 'all remains the same as afore.—Yet, avast a bit! there 's a somut red over the quarter—there it goes aloft!—she sees us, sir—she sees us!—she 's hoisted her ensign!—' Oh, yer reverence! who can describe the joy the sight of that bit o' buntin give us!—not a sowl spoke, but every man dropped on his knees, and the great Sarcher of hearts heard the silent swell of gratitude. The ship altered her course—she got within a mile of us,—daylight was rapidly declining, and it fell a stark calm. Doubt and uncertainty again came over our minds—there was a sudden change from joy to torturing anxiety,—a breeze might spring up after dark, and she might leave us to our fate. I still kept my eye upon the craft, and, oh! how my very heart did dance when I saw a boat shove off from the stranger and pull towards us! 'Thank God,' says I, 'we 're saved!' And so we was, yer reverence; though ounly eight ever saw the land again. As for the barque, poor thing!

we left her alone on the ocean, and were very kindly received aboard the Ganges East Ingeeman, which had parted company from her convoy in a gale o' wind, and had been driven by bad weather and heavy sailing bodily down into the nor'-west. —Thus, yer reverence may say, that a fine craft was abandoned and eleven men lost their lives all in regard o' them there rats."

The clergyman was about to reply; but Mr. Brief's gig at that moment drove up to the gate, and he immediately hastened out to receive him. The man of the law expressed himself much pleased with the appearance of our hero, and after dinner the subject of his future prospects was discussed, when it was finally agreed upon that he should commence his career in the service of his country; and the gunner having already obtained Captain Yorick's consent to give the youngster a cruise "just to see how he'd take to it," it was finally arranged that he should return with his foster-parent and be fitted out for the undertaking.

Melancholy was the parting between young Ten and the pretty Hollander; though why they should feel so much neither of them could exactly tell, especially as there was a prospect

of their soon meeting again. But so it was; and though anxious to make his way in the world, yet he could not forbear shedding tears that night, as he laid his head upon the pillow at the Roaring Boreas: and Eugenia felt as if she had lost her best and dearest friend.

CHAPTER III.

"All on board of a man of war."

It was a new scene to young Ten-thousand when, on the following morning, he embarked with his benefactor to join his ship. Yet the love of novelty, so natural to boyhood, and the aspirings of hope as the prospect of honour lay before him, were of too pleasing a character to admit of melancholy feelings. Henceforward he was to be devoted to his country, and a glow of pride freshened on his cheeks. The Scratchee was lying in Plymouth Sound, at no great distance from the spot where Will had first encountered him in the shore-boat; and though there was for a moment a hasty sensation of sickening desire to know the cause of his thus being mercilessly cast adrift, yet it speedily vanished as he mounted the side-steps and passed over the gangway. "Come along, young Six-foot!" said Mr. Blocks, giving the lad a rather rough lug by the arm, that some-

what embarrassed him; and they advanced to the quarter-deck, where stood an officer, tall and stout, with a quick full eye that seemed to let nothing escape him, rather manly than handsome in features, with black curling hair escaping from beneath a three-cornered cocked-up hat: but his legs destroyed the fine effect which was produced on the mind by the herculean proportions of the upper part of his frame;—they were, as he used to style them himself, "trap-sticks" Where he got them, and how he came to have a line-of-battle ship's figure-head and bows, to a gun-brig's stern, must remain amongst those occurrences that have never yet nor ever will be elucidated.

"I've come aboard, sir," said Blocks, raising his hat from his head, and addressing the person he mentioned,—"and made bould to bring the youngster with me, sir."

"Ay, I see," returned the captain, eyeing the youth with a rapid scrutiny: "never been in the lee-scuppers yet, I think you said?"

"No, sir," replied the gunner, "this 'll be his first trip; and I'm thinking, sir, he'll be none the worse for dipping his hand in a tar-bucket."

"None—none at all: if he's a good lad,

we 'll see what can be done for him," responded the captain. "What age is he?"

"It 's now just fourteen years since I first came athwart him, sir," answered Blocks; "and I hopes by dint of a little tuteration to make him turn out a seaman."

"Ay, ay, you 'll do right to *tuterate* him," said the captain, giving one of his rapid glances. "What 's his name?"

"Ten-thousand Topsail-sheet Blocks," returned the gunner somewhat proudly at the idea of his own penetration in the way of christening.

"And a devilish good name, too," responded the captain, "but rather too much hammered out. We must call him Young Blocks, for shortness.—And now, my lad, keep your weather eye up; don't get to play instead of minding the ship's duty. Look smart, and d— the dog that bit the barber!—Pray, Mr. Blocks, are all your stores on board?"

"Everything, sir, and stowed away," answered the gunner: "but if we could get another match-tub or two, sir, and a hand-bible, we should be all the better."

"Good! good!—the cooper shall make the first, and we 'll get the other from the dock-

yard when we return," replied the captain: and then shouting loudly "Unmoor ship!" the boatswain and his mates summoned the people to that duty.

"I have a small Bible in my chest," said young Blocks to the gunner as they walked forward; "and all that I have you're welcome to: it was given me by Mr. Hector, and though I shouldn't like to part with it altogether, yet it will always be at your service."

"Keep your Bible, my lad," uttered the gunner seriously, and surprised at the observation; "and you shall read it to me at proper times on Sundays. But what made you overhaul that in your talk just now?"

"Because I heard you tell the captain you wanted one," answered the boy.

"Who,—I!" exclaimed Blocks; "I talk to the skipper about Bibles! I should as soon think of axing him to let me spin a parson's yarn to the ship's company when they rigs out the church."

"I thought you said something about a hand-Bible," uttered the youngster diffidently.

"Oh, ay! why, Lord love your heart! so I did," acknowledged Blocks: "but them consarns as we call hand-bibles are small axes, kept for particular purposes."

"O—ho!" returned the lad, both enlightened and surprised at the designation given to such an instrument.

The Scratchee was what was termed one of the donkey-class of frigates, an eight-and-twenty cramped up in her proportions as if the projector had only in view the inconvenience of the men at their quarters, or thought that a little saving of wood and iron was to atone for every imperfection: still to young Blocks, who had never been to sea, it was a matter of perfect indifference, and he followed his patron down to his cabin. The confined abode, where darkness was made manifest by the rays emanating from a purser's dip, was rather appalling to one who had sweetly enjoyed the clear light of heaven and freely ranged the fields: a thought—it might be a comparison—presented itself in the parsonage-house he had so recently left, and the rough sturdy men who were hastening to their stations formed a striking contrast to the kind and gentle beings he had so lately parted from. Tears chased each other down his cheeks; but they fell unobserved, and the admonitions of Mr. Hector recalled him to greater firmness and energy. In another hour they were passing the Mew Stone, with a beautiful breeze; and when night spread its

shades upon the bosom of the waters, Ushant lights were seen dancing upon the verge of the horizon.

A few days made young Blocks perfectly contented with his lot. He had not been stationed by the first-lieutenant in any particular watch, or to any especial duty, and he enjoyed the free range of the frigate — every man treating him with affability, however homely, on account of his situation. Active and nimble, he could go aloft as smart as a topman; and the seamen, ever anxious and proud to give instruction to one so desirous of learning, taught him many things which it was necessary to know. The lieutenants took but little notice of him at first, — and the midshipmen quizzed him on account of his queer name — whilst the boys, though somewhat under the awe of the boatswain's rattan, were spitefully jealous that a youngster of their own class should have so much indulgence. But still the youth was far from idle, and though none could find fault with his conduct, yet he perceived that he was held in no very great estimation by those who ought to have been the first to perceive his good qualities. The master, however, a rough knot of the old school, very early became his

friend, and Captain Yorick not unfrequently gave him a word of encouragement.

One lovely evening about an hour before sunset, Ten-thousand went up into the mizen-top to sketch the Glenan Isles, off which the frigate was then lying. On descending again after completing his task, the captain was walking the quarter-deck and eyed him rather sternly. "The skipper has been sending all over the ship for you," whispered one of the quartermasters: "bear a hand aft, and, mind, dowse your truck and show your manners."

Away went the youngster, unconscious of having offended, yet apprehensive that something was wrong, which was not lessened by catching a glimpse of the gunner's face, on which anxiety and vexation were vividly depicted. The captain, however, had gone below to his cabin, and thither the lad was directed to follow him by the officer of the watch. He found the commander sitting at his table with a letter before him, which he took up and abruptly asked, "Pray, young man, is this your writing?"

The lad gave one look, and a sickly sensation came over his heart: it was a letter containing a description of the officers, from the

chief downward, and a sort of journal of their proceedings, which he intended forwarding to Mr. Hector. "Yes, sir," said he, "it is mine."

"For what purpose was it thrown down into my cabin, and by whom?" inquired the captain harshly.

"How it came into your possession, sir, I really cannot tell," answered the youth: "it was in my waistcoat-pocket previous to my going aloft, and, perhaps, has——"

"—Worked out whilst you were in the rigging," said the captain, his countenance assuming a milder expression. "And now, if you was in my place, what would you do with it?"

"If I had not already read it, sir," returned the youngster with more boldness, "I should return it unread."

"The devil you would!" exclaimed the captain, reddening up. "And how could you know whom it belonged to, and the purpose for which it was sent into your hands, without opening it? Here is no direction, and I was led to guess the writer by what is *there* contained.—Now, hear me, boy," and he assumed a severer mode of expression: "I *have* read your letter, and take my advice,—never,

for the future, make observations upon any one. There certainly is nothing offensive in it — nothing; but malice can twist a halter from half a dozen hairs. There are some d—d good hits: but if you wish to steer clear of personal animosity, never tickle a lion's rump, that's all. You are yet but a green-horn, and therefore I pass it over without further notice; but if ever you whisper, even in your sleep, another word about my legs, d— me if I don't use 'em to some purpose!—But go along forud—perhaps I may bring you to a court-martial yet, and produce the letter as evidence against you, for impeaching the *understanding* of a member of parliament,*—it's a clear breach of privilege."

Poor Ten-thousand was so terrified at the thoughts of having incurred the anger of his commander, as well as having the dread of disgrace before him, that, in his alarm and tremor, he dropped the small portfolio which contained the sketch he had just finished, as well as several minutely-finished water-colour drawings, and nearly the whole were instantly spread upon the cabin-deck. "Hand those things to me, youngster," said the captain;

* Captain Yorick was an M.P.

and the lad placed them before him. "Leave them here," he commanded; "go to your berth, and carry with you the advice I have given—log it in your memory, young man! Be honest and straightforud in all things; but, d— it! don't quiz the devil himself—unless, indeed, you're his superior officer,—and then don't carry the joke too far."

Young Blocks bowed and withdrew; and Captain Yorick—no mean proficient himself with the pencil—sat down to examine the sketches. Repeatedly did he look them over—placed them in various lights, to collect all their beauties—replaced them in the case, and audibly whispered, "That boy will make a bright man some day;—must see a little more of him though, before he comes aft."

Rumour soon spread the tale along the decks that Ten-thousand was in disgrace; and when he entered the gunner's cabin, honest Will was sitting with a can of stiff grog before him, and showing a most rueful figure-head. "What's all this about, you young scamp?" said he, spurred into ill-humour by the irritation of the moment; but instantly checking himself on looking at the countenance of the boy, he continued, "Not but what if you're in the right, I'd die before any one should injure you,

whilst it was in my power to lay an anchor to wind'ard of 'em. Every dog has fleas to back-bite him, and, mayhap,—though you 're no dog neither: but there, the best carack-ters in the world have been torn into babby-rags by malice. What did the skipper want with you, my boy? Come, out with it,—are you in the right or the wrong?"

"I am sorry to say, sir, that I 'm in the wrong," returned the youth: "although no harm was meant, yet Captain Yorick says I 'm in the wrong."

"Oh, he does, eh?" grinned Will as he bit through the huge mountain of tobacco in his mouth. "The skipper says you 're in the wrong, and you plead guilty, eh? Well, I 'm bless'd but this is beginning life merrily, anyhow, to make enemies where you ought to secure friends! Harkee, my fine fellow, arn't you got my example afore you, and can't you fear God and obey orders, and be d— to you! But what 's the damage? What have you been arter? Why the devil don't you speak, and not stand there as if your ideas were all becalmed, and your tongue won't answer the helm? Have you shied a wad at the skipper's legs, put a quid into the gun-room decanters, or stole the midshipmen's lump-sugar? Have

you made a tar-bucket of the purser's wig, poisoned the doctor with his own stuff, or stifled the marine-officer with pipeclay?"

All this was uttered with the utmost rapidity and volubility, and Will paused to take a long pull at his grog, after which it was necessary to get breath.

"I have done none of those things, sir," replied the boy mildly, his thoughts reverting to the parsonage-house, and the gentlemanly manners of his preceptor, so different from what he was then experiencing.

"What the devil *have* you done, then?" inquired the gunner. "Come, come, out with it."

"Mr. Blocks, the captain wants you in the cabin directly," said a quartermaster, opening the door.

"Ay, there it is!" exclaimed the gunner.—"But avast, avast! Arn't I been running ahead of my reckoning? The skipper 's not a man to do anything onjust or cruel, and mayhap I may make it all square again. We 've sarved together too long for a bit of a squall to part us; so keep up your courage, boy, and don't be down-hearted!"—and after finishing his grog, smoothing down his hair, and shaking young Ten-thousand by the hand,

he ascended the ladder to the main-deck, and walked aft to the cabin; whilst young Blocks seated himself on his chest, ruminating on what had occurred, and calling to mind the precepts of Mr. Hector, the tenderness of his wife, and the affectionate conduct of Eugenia. Whatever transpired in the cabin was kept secret; but the gunner returned in about ten minutes, called the lad to him, gave him a smile, hoped he didn't bear malice with his old friend for being hasty, and then they went on to the forecastle together to enjoy the coolness of the evening air.

The Scratchee was very fortunate in her cruise, and Ten-thousand found great excitement when chasing the enemy's vessels; but he was not employed in any regular duty, and therefore was not looked upon as properly belonging to the ship. The result of the affair with the captain was not known; though from no notice being taken of him for several days, the officers conjectured that he would be either sent on shore, or stationed before the mast. A circumstance, however, occurred that soon set the matter at rest.

Amongst the midshipmen was a delicate little lad, not eleven years of age, but with a spirit far beyond either his strength or magni-

tude. His watchmate was a stout youth of fifteen, sullen and despotic, fond of showing his seniority, and proud of his titled descent. Young Blocks had on more than one or two occasions observed the manner in which the elder treated the younger, showing an overbearing and not unfrequently cruel disposition. It was about a week after the affair of the letter, and little Parker had displeased his tyrannical messmate, for which the latter had thought fit to punish him by three or four smart blows with what is called a colt—a piece of rope knotted at the end; and Parker, to avoid a repetition of the severity, descended to the main-deck, just before the mainmast, on the larboard side. Our hero happened to have witnessed the whole transaction; but he forbore to interfere, as the gunner had given him positive directions never to address the midshipmen unless previously spoken to by them: yet, as he looked on the countenance of the poor little fellow, where sorrow was struggling with pride, he felt how happy it would have made him could he have been permitted to try and comfort him. Persons of tender years are generally correct readers of human sympathy as pictured in the expression of the features, and little Parker saw at a glance that Ten-

thousand wished to befriend him. But his tormentor again discovered him, and the colt was laid across his back. "Away on deck in your watch, you young skulker!" exclaimed the older midshipman. "What are you doing down here?"

"Getting out of your brutal way, Acheson," replied the youngster. "You'll force me to do something serious in my own defence one of these days, for I won't stand your ill usage much longer."

"Won't you, though!" rejoined the first contemptuously, and at the same time repeating the blow. "What, you'll complain, I suppose? Well, there's something for you to complain about!"

"No, Acheson," returned little Parker, "I will *not* complain of you, and I 'm not able to fight you; but I shall some time or other knock you down with a handspike if you go on treating me as you do. Why don't you thrash Mulleon or Ancell?—because you know you 'd get it again."

"No impertinence, boy!" commanded Acheson; "but away on deck, and see what Mr. Watts will say to you about handspikes."

"Ay, you talk about Mr. Watts, because—"

and here the lad paused, as if fearful to proceed.

"Because what?" vociferated the other, raising his colt. "Come, don't let us have it by halves, or Sweet-lips shall make his mark again."

"Why, because you are both alike," answered Parker: "and now I don't care if you kill me for it. I wish I was as big as Blocks: you shouldn't crow over me then."

"Nor Mr. Watts, either, I suppose," spitefully uttered Acheson. "But what has Blocks to do with it?—And," turning to Ten-thousand, "pray what business have you to be skulking there, and listening to the conversation of gentlemen?"

"I am neither skulking, nor listening to the conversation of gentlemen," returned Blocks coolly and firmly.

"No sauce, fellow!" exclaimed Acheson, strutting up to him with the colt in his hand; "and if you don't want a d— good starting, you'll get out of my way. Walk forud to your proper station."

"I have yet to learn whether you have a right to order me, sir," said Blocks, carelessly seating himself on the breach of the gun; "and

whether or no, I would warn you not to strike me."

"Indeed!" replied the other, his passion growing more violent from resistance: "and pray what would you do if I did?"

"Strike you again," said Blocks deliberately, whilst little Parker's face glowed with pleasure at the prospect of finding a champion.

"The devil you would—would you?" uttered Acheson, placing himself in a menacing attitude. "You! you plebeian foundling—you picked up scum of the ocean—" he paused from passion.

"Your abuse I treat with the contempt that it deserves," answered Blocks calmly, "and your threats are equally unworthy notice; but a blow would meet with a return, depend upon it."

"You impertinent scoundrel! You 'd strike an officer, eh? Mr. Watts shall know of this;" and Acheson dropped his colt.

"Ah, that 's just like your cowardly ways!" shouted little Parker. "And perhaps, when you 're telling Mr. Watts, you 'll let him know at the same time who it was that threw Blocks's letter down the cabin skylight."

This was something new to Ten-thousand;

it opened his eyes to the manner in which his letter had come into the captain's possession, though how Acheson had got hold of it remained a mystery. "Did he open it, Mr. Parker?" inquired he.

"Yes, he did," returned the youngster; "but he couldn't make out much of it, for he can hardly read writing."

Blocks said nothing; he was aware there was a malevolent motive, though he had given no cause for it. "Yes, I did read it," said Acheson; "and if you was only equal to me in rank, I'd try which would be master. However, *you* shan't be saucy, youngster, so away 'pon deck;" and a heavy blow of the colt fell upon poor Parker's shoulders.

"You are inflicting punishment on my account," said Blocks, starting up and facing him so as to get between the two; "if there 's anything wrong in what I have said, let your resentment fall on me."

"Get out of my way, you vagabond!" exclaimed the other, trying to hit Parker, but prevented by his opponent; "sheer off, you low-born —"

"Remember, Mr. Acheson, I 'll not stand a blow," exclaimed Ten-thousand; "and come what may, I 'll defend this young gentleman

with my life. You are, I believe, older and stouter than I; you are an officer, and I am nothing: but if you strike him again, I 'll try which is the best man."

Many of the seamen had gathered round, and there were two or three who had witnessed the whole from first to last, and nothing could exceed the pleasure with which they noticed the gallant conduct of young Blocks. To the latter part there was also another spectator; and that was the second-lieutenant, Mr. Watts. "Come on deck here, directly, Mr. Acheson, and Mr. Parker," shouted he: "and, master-at-arms, take that boy and place him aft in confinement."

The orders of the lieutenant were promptly obeyed; the two midshipmen ascended to the lee-side of the quarter-deck, and Ten-thousand, under the charge of the master-at-arms, was conducted abaft the wheel to wait the return of the captain, who had gone forward on to the forecastle to inspect the head-sails. Great indeed was the consternation of the gunner when informed that his protegé (who won more and more upon his rugged affections) was a prisoner; but one of his mates who had been present during the altercation set the behaviour of the youth in so favourable a light,

that the honest seaman, whilst alarmed at his situation, gloried in his exploit. At length the captain walked aft, and the lieutenant was about to make his report, but was promptly stopped by the generous Yorick, who exclaimed, "You are going to speak of the youngster, sir." The lieutenant bowed. "I beg pardon, but it is quite unnecessary, as I heard the whole myself. You, perhaps, might wish me to be severe with Mr. Acheson;" and he gave Watts one of his hasty glances; "but I think I can settle the difference in another way. Quartermaster, send my clerk to me."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the person addressed, and who had overheard the conversation, the purport of which he spread as he descended to the midshipman's berth; and the rumour extending along the mess-deck, most of the watch below went up to see in what way the skipper would "settle the difference." The captain continued pacing the deck till the clerk touched his hat before him and received some instructions. He then went below, directing the lieutenant to send Mr. Acheson and Blocks into his cabin. The youths complied with very different feelings: the former had not heard the observations of his commander, and entered the sanctum with confident boldness that he

could make his own story good; the latter was full of perplexity and doubt, yet secure in the innocency of his intentions.

"You may leave your prisoner, master-at-arms," said the captain, quietly seating himself, "and shut the door." A silence of several minutes ensued, which was broken by the entrance of the clerk with the ship's muster-book in his hand. "Have you entered him in the proper rating?" inquired Yorick. The clerk replied in the affirmative. "Then send the whole of the young gentlemen into the cabin." Another interval of stillness succeeded, disturbed only by the mustering of the midshipmen, who ranged themselves on the larboard-side, anxiously looking at each other as if to inquire what it all meant. As soon as the whole had assembled, "Cast loose this table," said the captain; and a dozen busy hands were instantly engaged in overhauling the turns of the seizings through the cleats. The table was soon adrift. "Stow these chairs in the after-cabin, and launch the table between the guns." This also was immediately done. "And now," continued the chief, erecting himself with dignity, "young gentlemen, attend to what I am going to say. You are starting in life devoted to the service of your country,

and it will rest principally upon the impressions you now receive, whether you turn out an honour or a disgrace to the profession. There are some among you of whom I entertain a pleasing expectation that they will become brave and good men, into whose hands on some future day the supremacy of the British flag may with safety be entrusted; and of others, I hope, that when experience has matured their reason, they also will do credit to the service. But, young gentlemen, it is not by quarrelling amongst yourselves—it is not by topping the officer one over the other, that this is to be achieved; and much less by acts of oppression. Mr. Acheson will understand me." All eyes were instantly directed at the unfortunate mid, who began to fear he had made a bit of a mistake. "Nor should the youngsters treat the oldsters with disrespect, but look up to them for kindness and protection; — remember that, Mr. Parker."

"I always have, sir," murmured the little fellow, "and always would, if Acheson wouldn't use his colt so much."

"I was witness to a scene just now," continued the captain, passing the observation of Parker unheeded by, though it drew forth a titter from the middies, "that pained me very

much. But, first of all, my lad," turning to Ten-thousand, who stood apart by himself wondering how it was to end, " let me advise you not to interfere in the quarrels of others, and never, whilst the case is doubtful, place yourself in defiance against a superior officer. I honour you for your noble defence of that child, and for the sentiments you expressed; but you did wrong to aggravate. However, we 'll pass that by. It was my intention to have placed you on the quarter-deck immediately on your coming aboard; but I was desirous of ascertaining, in the first instance, whether you were likely to be worthy of my patronage. You have answered my wishes; and if you keep from letter-writing, or at least from being so careless as to let your communications fall into the hands of a busy postman; — Mr. Acheson will comprehend the allusion," —again all eyes were fixed on the rueful countenance of the mid: — " I say," continued the captain, " if you will follow the counsel I have already given you, I hope I shall live to see you a flag-officer. During the little unpleasantness that took place just now upon the main-deck, Mr. Acheson used very unbecoming language — bringing discredit upon *my* ship, and the known gentlemanly feelings of my

officers. Mr. Blocks," — Ten-thousand's ears tingled at the Mister,—" and yourself expressed a strong hostility towards each other, such as ought not to exist between future messmates: and you, Mr. Acheson said, 'if Blocks was only equal to you in rank, you would give him a chance of trying which should be master.' Now, though you were extremely wrong in using the abusive language you did, yet I admired your spirit, and the preservation of your rank;" a slight smile of contempt curled the captain's lip; "and as Mr. Blocks is now rated midshipman," — Ten-thousand shook in every limb, — "why, sir, you must either apologise, and handsomely too, for your behaviour, or you must strip and fight him. Here's clear decks and no favour: each choose your seconds, and I 'll be umpire."

This was a mode of settling the difference but very little expected by the young gentlemen, and at the first they thought the captain was in joke; but his serious look assured them he was in earnest, and they began to look forward to some fun. A silence of two or three minutes followed the address, and Acheson stood rather doggedly sullen; but Ten-thousand, finding that no progress was made in any way, advanced steadily to Acheson and held out

his hand, which the other at first declined, but after a little hesitation took.

"You have acted generously, young gentleman," said Yorick; "and so we are to have no turn-up, after all! Lash the table and fetch the chairs back." This was effected in a few minutes, and the cabin-bell summoned the steward. "Place the decanters and wine-glasses." The board was spread. "Fill one glass, young gentlemen; drink success to your new messmate, and then away to your duties as shipmates and friends."

"Come — come along, Blocks!" shouted several of the midshipmen, dragging the youngster with them to the berth. "You only want a uniform coat and a jacket to fit you out, and we'll lend you them till the cruise is up. Heave ahead, my boy!" And in a short space of time Ten-thousand had mounted the weekly account, and walked forward to his generous but anxious patron, as he was sitting alone in his cabin; the candle burnt down nearly into the socket, just giving sufficient light to show the cheerless gloom that prevailed. "Well, my lad, and how is it to be — eggs, or young uns?" demanded the gunner, heaving out from the deep recesses of his capacious chest what he intended for a sigh. "Has the skipper

signed your Michaelmas—cast you off stock and fluke? No, no, d— it! I wrong him: he always does what's right, and does it well too.—But come, Ten, tell us all about it."

"Do you see this?" replied the youth, pointing to his jacket: "that will tell you all about it."

"What! rope's-eended?" asked Will, starting up, and by his quickness extinguishing the remnant of the light. "No, no, you can't mean that, Ten.—But there,—I've dowsed the glim. Here, boy — Cupid! where the devil have you stowed yourself, you horse-marine?"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the boy, flying down the ladder to wait upon his master: "I'm coming, sir."

"Like seven bells half struck," said Will. "Bear a hand and get a light, you son of a sea-coote. And what is it, Ten, you have got to show me,—eh?"

"The first-letenant wants you immediately, Mr. Blocks," said the same quartermaster who has been mentioned before; "and I give you joy."

"Give me the devil!" muttered the gunner, emerging from his den. "What can the first-leftenant want with me?"

"It isn't you that is wanted, sir," replied the quartermaster from the square of the hatchway.

"Who then? you said Mr. Blocks," asserted the worthy tar. "Why, what are you all bamboozling about?"

"It 's young Mr. Blocks as is wanted, sir," explained the quartermaster, "and not you."

"Oh, what, I 'm to be considered as nothing better than *old* Blocks, eh?" grumbled the gunner,—"treated like condemned stores!—But what does all this mean?—why don't you speak, Ten?"

"My dear sir," replied the youth, deeply affected, "the captain has rated me midshipman, and——"

"Oh, d—it! is that all?" uttered the gunner with assumed carelessness, for his heart beat at a rattling rate with delight. "I knew I had interest enough with the skipper to make an officer of you. But there—bear a hand on deck, my boy—I beg pardon, *Mr.* Blocks. But, Jem," —Ten-thousand started off up the ladder,—"I say, Jem,—here, just swallow a glass of grog to the future prosperity of the lad—Lord love him! he 's somehow or other got double-bitted round my heart, and when I think any mis-

chief 's going to fall athwart his hawse, it makes me shiver and shake like a Lascar in a snow-storm."

The object of the first-lieutenant's interview with our hero was to put him in a watch and appoint him to his station in the various routines of duty. Mr. Spicer was a smart officer, and an amiable man; and whilst giving his directions to the youth, relative to future conduct, in a voice that showed his very soul was engaged in the profession, there was a gentlemanly and pleasing deportment that did not fail to have a due influence with Ten-thousand. On his return forward, it was agreed between the youth and his patron, that he should rough it out in the midshipman's berth; and thither he removed to join his new messmates, and seated himself by Acheson.

"You may perhaps take it into your head to think, that because the captain has placed you on the quarter-deck, you may swagger as you please," said Acheson to him spitefully: "but I'll thank you to keep your distance from me, and not attempt to make yourself my equal."

"Shame, shame, Acheson!" said Ancell, a youth of the same age with the individual he addressed. "If you don't clap a stopper on

your pride, the captain will make you strip yet."

"And pray, what business is it of yours?" exclaimed Acheson fiercely: "can't you mind your own affairs, and leave me to mine?"

"Everybody knows that you *never* interfere in other people's concerns," uttered Mullion sharply and sneeringly. "For my part, I think your godfather was a barber, and taught you to be always meddling with everything, as well as seeing you made perfect in the vulgar tongue."

A laugh at Acheson's expense followed this sally, which served to increase his ill-humour; but he answered with hauteur, "My godfather a paltry barber, indeed! No, sir, my godfather was his Grace the Duke of Portland."

"Then he's got a graceless godson," rejoined an old master's-mate, who had hitherto sat silent; "and though the duke's no barber, he's always amongst the *whigs*." A roar of applause followed this hit; which having subsided, he went on—"Now, I'll tell you what it is, Acheson,—if you don't belay the slack of your pomposity, and take a couple of reefs in your conceit, d— me if I don't have a court-martial in the berth, and cob you with the horse-shoe end of the boot-jack!"

"Do at your peril!" uttered Acheson, attempting a fierceness of manner, though it was evident he was afraid the threat would be carried into execution.

"Yes, I *will* do it at my own peril, and I will do it at my leisure too; for it would be hardly worth while to disturb the peace of the mess for a subject so worthless," answered the master's-mate. "However, whilst I'm caterer, I *will* be minded, in spite of either the barber or the duke."

"That's right, Mac!" said little Parker. "I'm sure I always obey you; and why shouldn't Acheson? He wouldn't strip in the cabin, though."

"Hold your tongue, youngster, and don't shove your oar in where 'tis not wanted," ordered the master's-mate: "though perhaps it would have been as well to have backed up so much blustering by at least *showing* fight."

"He would not give me time," exclaimed Acheson with a rather subdued voice. "What! do you think I'm afraid of him?"

"He'll fight you now, Acheson!" shouted Ancell, desirous of seeing him thrashed. "I'm sure he'll fight you:—won't you, Blocks?"

"I shall always be ready to defend myself," returned Ten-thousand boldly; "and when

Mr. Acheson thinks fit to attack me, or those who are less able to stand against him, I'll try my best to convince him that he shall not do it with impunity. But I should be very loath, the first evening that I have joined the berth, to be the cause of dissensions and blows. However, I will place myself in the hands of the gentlemen of the mess."

"Fight him! — fight him!" roared the youngsters, delighted at the prospect of mischief.

"I see you are all against me," uttered Acheson, rising up, "and therefore I should have no chance. However," turning to Parker, "*you* sha'n't crow;—remember, 'tis my middle watch."

"But not mine," returned the little fellow, clapping his hands and laughing with delight. "No, no — the captain is too just a man to leave me to your tender mercies. I'm in Mr. Stowage's watch now; so you may keep your colt—the foal of an ass—to yourself. Ah! anybody may see you 're afraid to fight."

A box of the ear from the master's-mate checked Parker's volubility.

"No impertinence, youngster!—hold your tongue, and shut down the port: I'll have no fighting now. Here, Ebony! — Ebony!

where's that dark-looking thunder-cloud got to?—Ebony! Call Ebony there outside."

"Ebony!"—"Ebony!"—"Ebony!" was passed from mouth to mouth, till it reached the sable ears of a negro who acted as midshipman's steward. And here it may be as well perhaps to remark, for the benefit of the embryo heroes of the cockpit, that black is the best colour for their attendants, as it never shows the dirt; and it is proverbial throughout the service, that the midshipman's boy is always the most blotted copy of a servant in the ship.—"Ebony!"

"Here em tis, saar," answered the steward, hastily descending the hatchway. "Garamighty! whar for you makee me start so?—me coming, saar;" and he entered the berth.

"I tell you what it is, Master Guinea," uttered the master's-mate slowly: "if ever you haul your wind out of this again so as to get a boat-hook's length away from the reach of my voice, I shall borrow Mr. Acheson's colt. Get supper."

"Em no tink he want em just now, saar," returned the black: "me go on deck for see da trange fleet."

"A strange fleet!" burst from every voice, and in two minutes the berth was cleared.

Ten-thousand accompanied the rest on deck, and by the lights which were seen dancing on the waters, it was evident that a large fleet was in sight; but whether friends or foes, was as yet undetermined. Captain Yorick, Mr. Spicer, and Mr. Stowage (the master), were attentively scanning them through their glasses.

"They 're English, I think, sir," said Mr. Spicer: "most probably Lord Howe."

"I 'm very dubersome about that, Mr. Spicer," replied the master. "If them were British ships, there wouldn't be such a wasteful expenditure of purser's dips, because Lord Howe wouldn't show never a glim but his own to tell 'em whereabouts he was.—But look, sir, at the lights in the centre;—why, it's like Piccadilly of illumination night. Take my word for it, they 're enemies; and that fellow in the centre is the three-decker as chased us about six weeks since—the Goat and Oar, or some such name."

"The what, master?" inquired the captain; "the Goat and ——? Come, that's not so bad, anyhow; but it would have been better 'Cot.' However, I believe you are right. It is the French fleet, sure enough; the ship you speak of is the Côte d'Or, and Morard de Galles is at sea. Now, snug 's the word! Mr. Spicer,

send down and let the watch below bring up their hammocks and stow them. Who's got the watch?"

"I have, sir," replied the master.

"Then let the watch on deck see all clear for making sail," said the captain: "we must give these fellows a wider berth. I wish to Heaven Lord Howe was where I am! not a —— would ever see France again."

The Scratchee was lying pretty close under the land, so that she could not be so well distinguished as if she had been outside the strange fleet, which, with a southerly wind, was stretching away on the larboard tack. The night was tolerably clear overhead; but there was a haze upon the horizon, which, though it did not conceal objects to seaward, yet rendered them dim and obscure in-shore. But there was no mistaking the long line of dancing, flickering lights, which enabled the captain to count twenty-five sail—just the number of line-of-battle ships and frigates that he had reconnoitred a day or two before at anchor under Belleisle. The situation of the English ship was rather critical: she was close to Groa, and had, during daylight, gone under French colours within range of the batteries; she was to leeward, and might be easily cut off, should

any sharp eye catch sight of her. Trusting to escape unseen, the sails of the Scratchee were clewed up and furled; but the topmen were kept aloft to loose them at a moment's warning. Everything was prepared at quarters, and the gunner was in his glory, when up rose the moon—the breeze freshened, the haze cleared away, and Captain Yorick became aware that further concealment was vain, as two of the fleet were distinguished standing in towards L'Orient. In less than five minutes the frigate was clothed with a cloud of canvass right up to her trucks, and pelting along like a race-horse. One of the ships immediately came in chase, bearing up to cut her off, whilst the other pursued her course. The Scratchee, however, had scarcely got clear of Groa, when another ship was seen not more than two miles distant, upon the starboard quarter, running along between that island and the main. When first discovered, she was under easy sail, and it was doubtful whether she was a merchantman or a fighting-craft; but having made out the eight-and-twenty, the matter was placed beyond dispute by her crowding sail, as supposed, in pursuit.

"Let me have the best helmsman in the ship at the wheel," said the captain, address-

ing the first-lieutenant. "We're in the split-stick now; but I'll try and exchange berths with them, if Sir John Warren is anywhere in the neighbourhood. Those fellows 'll be kicking my —— presently, and bring down more of their frigates. Where the devil is Lord Howe?—But that's just the way they manage affairs at home!—tremble at a little expense for an outfit—delay the sailing of an armament through parsimony, and then throw away millions to redeem the error."

"That 's pretty much the case, sir," said the master, to whom the foregoing observations had been addressed; "like the ould saying, 'penny-wise and pound-foolish.'"

"It's d— hard to be driven away in this fashion, too!" continued Yorick: "I expected a consignment of at least a couple of West Indiamen to my agent, and a few re-captures." He directed his night-glass to the ship in-shore, and added, "That fellow overhauls us; and let him be what he will below a forty, I should like to have a slap at him. But then there's the other," looking out to seaward; "by the Lord! but he rises fast!—ah, there goes his signal! Get a gun ready forud." "All ready," was the immediate response. "Fire!" shouted the captain, and the report echoed between the

walls of canvass like a dozen discharges. "One light in the main rigging," continued the chief, and a signal lantern was almost instantly displayed. "Another gun from the enemy: repeat it!" cried Yorick: again the loud thunder bellowed amongst the swelling sails. "A blue light and a rocket," said the captain: "d— the frog-eating rascal! he fancies himself at Vauxhall. Mr. Blocks, up with a rocket!" and in half a minute a beautiful pale blue flame shed its gleams upon the ocean, and gave a spectral appearance to the men and ship, such as imagination would picture the ghastly vision of some of those death-craft which seamen assert are sometimes flitting above the waters rather than in them. Another half-minute, and away flew a train of fire into the heavens, as if to show the daring ingenuity of man in combining the elements to suit his murderous purposes. "Oh, he's done, has he!" said Captain Yorick: "now see what the —— in-shore says." All eyes were directed to the ship that was running along the land; but she made no return to the signals, and was walking up abeam of the Scratchee, hand over hand. The moon had well risen, and, to the surprise of Captain Yorick, the seaward ship, which approached near enough to show that she was of

the line, hauled dead upon a wind, and gave over the chase; whilst the other was clearly made out to be a vessel of war, somewhat about the dimensions of the Scratchee. "Bamboozled the fellow, by — !" shouted Yorick, unable to repress his mirth: "and now to be somewhat loving with our neighbour there, who, I begin to suspect, is much of the same breed as ourselves. Port a little, lad — port! keep her another point to starboard: there—steady, so. How shall we do for the Penmarks, master?"

"All clear, sir, on this course," answered Mr. Stowage, looking at the compass. "But if that there 's a Frenchman, and has any suspicion of us, he 'll haul in for Quimperlay, supposing he don't want to fight."

"Spoke like an oracle, master," said the captain; "and the point which he must round is —"

"— About two leagues distant from him," answered Stowage, without waiting for the finish of the question.

"How 's the current?" inquired the captain, steadily fixing his assisted sight upon the ship, that was now abeam of him, and not more than half a mile distant.

"We have got the last drain again us out here, sir," replied the master; "but I'm duber-

some whether he does not catch the first of the flood where he is."

"To quarters, Mr. Spicer," said the captain; "let the sail-trimmers take their station on the fokstle, ready for the moment's orders:" and the men, by means of the young gentlemen, were in a very few minutes at their guns, prepared and determined to do their best to conquer, should the stranger be an enemy; but the general opinion ran that she was an English cruiser or a Yankee trader: the latter was most prevalent.

"Port, my lad!" said the captain; "port another half-point, so we shall near each other faster; have the private signal ready,—three lights in a triangle—one up the starboard main-rigging, another by the gangway, and the third by the after-swifter, with a blue light. Bear a hand! — we 'll try his pluck, at all events," added he, turning to the first-lieutenant. A noise was heard on the main-deck, for discipline had hardly yet got its ascendency. "What 's that row there below? By —! no wonder we deceive the Frenchman; for if she 'd heard you lubberly sons ———— make such a thundering noise—no wonder, I say, she took us for one of their own craft. Stand clear, my men! I abominate a Frenchman and

all his ways. They 've more tongue than brains; whilst British tars have their mouths shut and their eyes open. If there 's any d— Crapeaus among you there, hand 'em on deck in a clean plate." The noise abated, though it did not cease, and Yorick sprang down upon the main-deck, where several of the crew were quarrelling, and rather mutinous, on account of some severity that had been practised by one of the boatswain's mates. Yorick strode, or rather straddled amongst them. "I 'll not hang you, ye lubbers! the expenditure of a piece of rope is more than you 're worth; but I 'll do worse, you ——! I 'll disgrace you: you shall be pointed at as the cowardly Scratchees—you shall be drafted amongst the fleet, and be in every black-list throughout the service. You've a French frigate in-shore, that I made sure you would take into Plymouth with you. But do you think I 'd go into action with a set of ——— that presume to disobey their officers? No, no! we must run away—we must leave our prize, and be d— to you! But every man will be pointed at by the ——, when you go ashore, as cowards. You 'll all be known—ay, I 'll put a mark upon you for ever: instead of brandy, you shall have a brand; and if you ask for *why* (y) — Cowards have no spirit —— Mr.

Spicer!"—the first-lieutenant's "Ay, ay, sir," was responded,—"Mr. Spicer, let the sail-trimmers see all clear for shortening sail, and call the drummer."

Yorick ceased, and not a whisper was heard—all was as still as death. "Are you English or French?" shouted he; "d— your hearts, let me know! But there, let the French —— come in a-midships, and my own tars stand to their guns." In an instant every seaman was at his station, and the captain returned to the quarter-deck. "Show the private signal," said the captain, and it was immediately displayed as ordered, but no notice was taken of it. "What have I got there upon the main-deck, English or French?" shouted Yorick: and a simultaneous cry arose, "English, by —— !" He did not suffer a moment's pause before his voice was again heard: "Then stand by your bull-dogs."

The strange ship kept her course, and in about another quarter of an hour the two were within hailing-distance. "Hooo — whooo!" shouted Yorick through his speaking-trumpet, but no answer was returned. Again the loud sonorous voice of the captain flew across the waters, but still no reply was made. "Mr. Blocks," said the captain in an under tone to Ten-thousand,

"run forud and tell your namesake to throw a shot from the bow-gun right under that fellow's fore-foot."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the youngster, and promptly hastened along the gangway to the forecastle, where he delivered his orders.

"We'll see, my boy—we'll see," said Will, taking a handspike and heaving the breach of the gun round to the required position. "Now then!" He applied the match — the smoke wreathed up, and the report rebounded from the stranger.

"Very well hove," said the captain; "knocked away his flying jib-boom. Hooo!" he shouted again, and was answered in French—"Le Commerce de L'Orient—what frigate's that?"

"His Britannic Majesty's ship"—The captain was not allowed to finish the words, before the shots from a broadside came crashing and rending through the sides and spars of the Scratchee, and the battle commenced. "Pass the word to the officers of divisions to order the men at their quarters to unrig the fellow. He goes two foot to our one, and he'll outwalk us if we don't shorten sail for him. Fire high, men! Mr. Blocks, see if you can't take in his main-topsel for him."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the gunner, highly

pleased at the confidence which his chief seemed to place in his professional talents, and busying himself with the forecastle gun; "I 'll try my luck, anyhow. Elevate her muzzle, Jem—so, so; that 's too high—depress an inch or two—steady." He cast his eye along the sight, watched the motion, and, when suitably laid, waited for a clearance in the smoke. The opportunity was offered, and the next minute the main-top-gallant mast of the enemy was knocked away close to the cap. Ten minutes decided the business: the stranger's canvass was rent to shreds,—there was no chance of escape,—she ceased firing, and hailed that she had struck. Nor was there much surprise caused at her doing so, when on boarding she was found to be a privateer, mounting twenty-six guns, with a crew of two hundred and forty men, quite new, admirably fitted out and well found: she belonged to Bordeaux, and had left Basque Roads early in the morning, with the intention of trying her luck in the British Channel. The fire of the English frigate had done great execution; fourteen lay dead, and there were upwards of sixty wounded who were found lying about the decks unheeded by their shipmates, and many of them bleeding to death.

CHAPTER IV.

The bullets are flying, huzza! huzza!
The bullets are flying away, away;
The brawny boarders mount by the chains,
And are over their buckles in blood and brains!
On the foeman's deck, where a man should be,
Young Hamilton Tighe
Waves his cutlass high,
And *Capitaine Crapaud* bends low at his knee.
Legend of Hamilton Tighe.

No sooner was the prize taken possession of, than all sail was immediately made to escape from the vicinity of the French fleet, who Captain Yorick naturally concluded would hear the reports of the guns, and the admiral would probably send a far superior force to his own, for the purpose of ascertaining the cause. The privateer was kept close to the Scratchee during the night, the crew of the frigate remaining at their quarters. The breeze freshened; the water remained smooth; the men had but little to do, so they sat and conversed together on the nature of their con-

quest, and calculated the amount of prize-money each would share. They laughed heartily at the promptitude of the "skipper" in setting matters to right, and restoring good order on the main-deck when an ebullition of strong feeling had overpowered discretion. The Scratchees were a rough, undisciplined set, though braver fellows never toed a line at muster; but they became sensible that they had a master-spirit to deal with, and felt no repugnance at the conviction.

A little before daybreak, both ships having gained a good offing, were hove to, and the boats were busily engaged in removing the prisoners. Young Blocks found his knowledge of the French language peculiarly serviceable, not only to himself, but also to those officers who were ignorant of it, as well as the unfortunate captives. The privateer's crew were none of the most reputable individuals in life;—indeed, she had been manned chiefly from the gaols and galleys, as the men-of-war had picked up most of the seamen that could be found to fit out and complete the complements of the French fleet. Amongst such a set there was some difficulty in compelling obedience, and a gang of about fifty in a state of intoxication got forward on the main-deck of the

privateer, as if determined to resist removal; and the second-lieutenant sent Acheson down with a party of marines to fire at them if they would not obey. Ten-thousand, with five or six seamen, was remonstrating with them on their folly, and pointing out that it was likely to prove fatal to some, and might lead to the mutilation of others. One of their own officers warmly supported him, and the fellows were becoming more reasonable, when Acheson made his appearance with the marines coming forward along the main-deck. Without delaying an instant, though he must have been aware that Blocks and the frigates' men were between him and the enemy, he ordered the marines to fire; and these well-trained disciplinarians would in sheer obedience to the word of command have poured in a destructive volley, had it not been for the serjeant opportunely joining them at the very moment they were coming to the present, and shouting with stentorian lungs, "Recover arms!" One musket was, however, fired, and an unfortunate Frenchman who was standing close by Blocks gave a convulsive struggle and breathed his last. The privateer's men were enraged, but they saw how useless would be resistance, especially as Acheson had again

directed the marines to fire; but the serjeant insisted upon ordering his own men, and the Frenchmen went sullenly on deck.

"Whatever was your intention, Acheson," said Ten-thousand, as soon as duty would permit,—"whatever was your intention in making an instantaneous attack upon those fellows, you ought to have remembered that some of our own men would have been exposed to the marines' fire."

"I am not to be schooled by you, sir," returned Acheson fiercely, "a mere know-nothing, that never was at sea before. I am your senior officer here, and I order you on deck."

"An order I shall not obey, as I am under the command of Mr. Watts, and not you," returned our hero. "Nor would I leave these prisoners to your ferocious nature."

"Send the marines on deck directly," shouted the second-lieutenant: "and, Mr. Acheson, remain down there, and see the prisoners up as quick as possible."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered Acheson, but without moving a step from his position. The serjeant marched off his party up the hatchway, and Blocks, calling his handful of men together, prepared to descend to the orlop,

for the purpose of ascertaining whether there was any one concealed. "Remain with me, men," exclaimed Acheson; "I shall want you here."

"Mr. Watts placed them under me for this especial duty," returned Blocks firmly, "and not one shall quit me without my sanction."

"But I'm not going to be left alone here with such a set of cut-throat rascals," said Acheson somewhat imploringly. "I shall go and report to Mr. Watts."

"Take care what you say, Acheson," uttered Ten-thousand: "remember, falsehood and malice often defeat themselves. As far as I am concerned, I defy you; but think well before you speak,—it may be good for your own safety."

"Three times to-day have you run athwart me," exclaimed Acheson: "d— you! come what will, I'll have revenge!" He darted towards the hatchway, down which Blocks was descending, and aimed a furious blow at him with a cutlass; but the latter, making a jump to the bottom of the ladder, avoided the stroke; whilst the cowardly rascal, meeting with no resistance, overbalanced himself, and went sprawling head foremost down the hatchway, where he lay bruised and stunned. At first so indig-

nant was Ten-thousand, that he determined to let him lie; but better feelings prevailed, and therefore, raising him up, he ordered two of the men to convey him upon deck, whilst he with the remainder prosecuted his search. As soon as it was finished, he made his report to Mr. Watts, and found that Acheson had been sent in a state of insensibility on board the frigate. For himself, he had formed a resolution not to make any mention of the transaction; but he did not deem it an act of justice to lay any restraint upon the men who had witnessed what had taken place.

Mr. Watts was appointed to command the prize and take her into Plymouth, whilst the frigate made sail to look out and give information that the French fleet was at sea.

"And what do you think of fighting, Ten?" inquired the gunner of his protegé when next they met. "It's rough-and-tumble work to them as arn't used to it! I hears you behaved very well, and it warms my heart, Ten,—for, somehow, I can't help thinking of you, let you be where you will."

"Your kindness is always acceptable to me, sir," returned the youth modestly; "and I have nothing in life to wish for if Acheson wouldn't bear me such deadly animosity."

"Have a care of him, lad," whispered the gunner, shaking his head: "he's like a pet monkey, full of spite, and would do you an injury if he could. Such officers ruin the sarvice, and I'm thinking some day or other he'll be napping monkey's allowance, more kicks than ha'pence, Ten. Howsomever, he's hove down in the sick-list now, and mayhap will have to be left ashore next cruise; so keep your weather-eye up, Ten, and we 'll get to wind'ard of him yet."

Acheson was severely hurt, but he was too wise to say anything about the cause, although it was pretty well known by his messmates and amongst the ship's company; and whilst it lowered him in their estimation, it served to raise Ten-thousand higher than ever. None pitied the former; indeed, there were many who rejoiced, and no one more heartily than little Parker, who now looked up to our hero as his best friend and protector. But the highest gratification young Blocks experienced was derived from the approbation of his commander, who honoured him with especial favour — particularly at those periods when the tensity of duty becomes relaxed, and the generous wine expands the heart of true benevolence. Ten-

thousand took his regular turn at the captain's dinner-table, and on more than one occasion they had been employed sketching together in the morning.

The number of prisoners on board the frigate exceeded that of the ship's company, and being most of them desperate characters, it was necessary to be constantly on the alert,—for as half a dozen might perpetrate the worst mischief, so it was utterly impossible to detect the offenders amongst so many. This may be exemplified by stating that when the Scratchee returned to Plymouth, and a range of the cable was hauled up previous to letting go the anchor, it was found cut nearly strand-through in several places; and once or twice the breechings of the guns had been similarly dealt with. Captain Yorick, however, trusted to his own vigilance, and he never quitted the deck without leaving it in charge of one of the officers—generally the first-lieutenant, on whom he could place the strictest reliance, — for he was well aware that not only did the prisoners require a sharp eye, but also several of his own people were not to be depended on. Still, as the French West-India convoy was hourly expected, he felt a repugnance at quitting their track, and thereby losing a chance of encou-

raging his officers and men, as well as improving his own fortune.

There were one or two among the prisoners who seldom made their appearance, and rumour spread conjectures that they had cogent reasons for concealment; nor was this supposition lessened when one of them, an officer, was discovered to be in intimacy with Mr. Acheson. How they had become acquainted was a mystery to all, and the young man's unamiable propensities forbade the attributing of the acquaintance to feelings of compassion or generosity. Certain it was, that the Frenchman (who, however, was strongly suspected to be an Englishman) paid the midshipman very great attention during his confinement, and was most obsequious to his wishes. As soon as Acheson was able to move about, Captain Yorick questioned him on the subject; but the young man "denied all previous knowledge of the prisoner," and "protested, the only motive which actuated him was humanity;" — that, "being neglected by his messmates, (which was untrue,) Dubois had nursed him with kindness and attention."

"I will not urge you further Mr. Acheson," said Captain Yorick, "and I have no right to wring a secret from you when the life of a

fellow-creature is at stake. Still, sir, there are circumstances which have come to my knowledge;" — Acheson trembled in every limb. "Sit down, sir, — your illness has made you nervous and weak," — and Yorick condescendingly handed him a chair. "I was observing, that circumstances had come to my knowledge which renders the position of that man extremely doubtful: his shipmates speak of him in terms of disrespect — as a hardened, abandoned miscreant; and Captain Belliaud has more than hinted that the marks of the fetters are yet upon his wrists and ankles. Such a character is not very likely to be influenced by the impulses of humanity, and therefore I am induced to look to some other cause for his attention to you. Mind, sir, your secret is with yourself, but if you have respect for the service and veneration for your king, you will never suffer a traitor to escape. — I do not say positively that Dubois is a traitor—I have no means of proving it; but I tell you in fairness, that if I do find him out, by ——, sir, he shall hang, and your situation will be rather precarious, young gentleman!" — Acheson was about to speak, but was instantly checked by his chief, who went on. "Avast, sir, — avast! — I have appealed to your honour — I have

touched your pride,—but I have also used threats. Go, young gentleman, and digest the whole. Think calmly and deliberately. What has passed here shall rest between ourselves,—it shall not be said that I wrested a secret from you. Go to your berth, sir, and commune with your own heart."

Acheson immediately obeyed; and Dubois was ready to receive him, not in the midshipman's berth, for that would not be allowed, but at the place where the invalid's hammock was suspended. The young man looked cautiously around to discover whether there were any listeners; but finding there was no one within hearing, he whispered,

"You are suspected, Clairfait, and if discovered, you know your doom."

"Will you venture to betray me?" asked the other in the same tone of voice, and in perfect English.

"What can I do?" returned Acheson mournfully. "If you are found out, it will be my ruin; and the tale you have told me may not have a word of truth in it."

"As you please," said the other doggedly; "but remember, as sure as he I told you of is now in the same ship with you, so sure shall be your downfall with mine. I have docu-

ments in Plymouth sufficient to convince an unbelieving Jew: besides, I fear no one's recognition if you are silent."

"It is a very awkward affair," uttered Acheson, a secret determination working in his mind to betray his companion, if he could do so without injury to himself. "What you have told me is most mysterious and improbable."

"But it is nevertheless the truth; ay, as clearly the truth as that the sun gives light and the heavens are studded with stars," said the prisoner.

"There are certainly several circumstances of a nature that tend to give a foundation to your statements," observed Acheson.

"Betray me, and you will find the whole a reality—a fearful reality," answered the man. "And recollect, young gentleman, I have a palliative to plead: for though I was born in England, and my mother a native of that country, yet my father was a Frenchman; and who can blame me for preferring the land of my father's nativity to my own? Use your pleasure, sir: the name I go by is properly my own, that of Clairfait, but assumed.—Your name! you scarcely know it yourself."

"Are you well assured that there is no

fear of detection?" asked Acheson more composedly.

"There is not a being on earth, at least nigh hand, whom I care for, so that you will but keep my council," replied Dubois. "Do not let a craven fear annihilate your future hopes and prospects. Do not drag down disgrace and poverty on those whom you are bound to love." Acheson shuddered. "Do not place your enemy on the pinnacle of fortune, and at the same moment sink yourself to perdition."

"Never, never, so help me ——!" answered the midshipman, forgetful that he was calling upon the God of justice and retribution to attest his adherence to crime. "Leave me, Dubois, leave me now," added he, much agitated; "let me turn in a little while and think."

"Eh bien, monsieur," exclaimed the prisoner aloud, and assisting Acheson into his hammock, "bon repos!" and he quitted the spot.

That the pretended Frenchman had obtained an amazing influence over the young man's mind there could not be a doubt, and that it was by means known only to themselves was equally certain; for as he lay in

his hammock heavy groans burst from his heart, in spite of his endeavours to suppress them: but there was no one near to listen, or to soothe him; every soul, except a few of the prisoners, and the sentries who watched over them, was on deck, making sail in chase of a large lugger that was seen in the north-east with a ship close to her. They were both hove to, and it was supposed to be a French privateer boarding an English merchantman. The two vessels, however, very speedily separated and stood on different courses; and though a good re-capture would have paid the best, yet Captain Yorick lost not an instant in deciding to pursue the lugger, especially as he carried a fine breeze, whilst the others lay nearly becalmed. The lugger had got out her sweeps, and was making very fair headway; but the frigate came rapidly up with her till nearly within gun-shot, when she also lost the wind, and her sails hung flapping against the masts. Still she held her own with the lugger, till the light breeze died entirely away, and not a breath curled the surface of the blue wave.

"Send the prisoners below," exclaimed the captain, as he rapidly paced the deck, and occasionally paused to cast a hasty glance at

the strangers. The order was promptly obeyed; the prisoners were sent below, and a serjeant with a party of marines placed over them to keep the whole in order. The officers, however, were suffered to remain. As soon as the first-lieutenant had reported the main-deck clear, he was directed to get the boats out, and prepare to take command of them. In a quarter of an hour all the boats were in the water manned and armed, the launch with an eighteen-pounder carronade in her bows, and the pinnace with a twelve-pounder carronade.

The lugger was not two miles distant, and the ship between three and four.

"Had we not better divide the party, sir?" said the first-lieutenant. "The cutter and jolly-boat might recapture the ship, whilst we carried the lugger."

"Remember the old man and the bundle of sticks, Mr. Spicer," responded Yorick. "Do you capture the lugger; I'll take care of the ship afterwards." He then added in an under tone, "I have given young Blocks the small cutter; have an eye upon the youngster, and let me know how he behaves. The gunner has got the pinnace." He looked over the gangway unexpectedly, and hallooed out,

"Halloo! whose head's that bobbing up in the stern-sheets of the small cutter?" and up rose little Parker with a pistol in his hand, and a heavy cutlass buckled round him. "Pray, Mr. Tom-tit," shouted the captain, "who gave you permission to leave the ship? Come, sir, come on board again. Do you think I could spare so important a personage at such a time as this?" and Yorick laughed as the child reluctantly ascended the side, fearful of having offended his commander. "No, no, Mr. Parker," added the captain, highly pleased at the boy's gallantry, but assuming a severe look to deter him from such freaks in future, "I cannot afford to expend you yet awhile; and let it be clearly understood between us, that you remain on board till both bowers are fast in the ground, and the ship is held by the nose between them. Go aft, sir,—I must have a few more words with you presently." And the brave little fellow, dragging a cutlass as long as himself, to the great amusement of all who saw him, walked aft to an old friend—Mr. Stowage.

"Mercy on us! what hog in armour have we here?" exclaimed the master, laughing heartily. "I 'm sure the captain ought to have let you gone, for the lugger wouldn't

attempt a defence with such a Goliath as you in the boat."

"I am not to be despised because I am little, sir," answered the mortified boy. "I might have done some good."

"And been sent home to your heart-broken mother, stowed away in a cartridge-box, with your head knocked off," returned the master, gratified by the boy's demeanour. "I am afraid Blocks will get reprimanded, though, for suffering you to get in the boat."

"It was not his fault, sir,—indeed it was not," urged Parker, alarmed lest his friend should get into trouble. "He did not know I was in the cutter, for I stowed myself away in the bows at first, and when I went aft he wanted to send me aboard again. Indeed, Mr. Stowage, Blocks was not to blame."

At this moment a loud shout arose from the flotilla as they shoved off and formed, and three hearty cheers resounded, which were answered by those remaining in the frigate. "Beat to quarters, Mr. Stowage," said the captain as soon as silence was restored; and at the roll of the drum the men handled their arms and took their stations.

"Your armament will hardly succeed," said Captain Belliaud, late of the privateer,

to Yorick, as they stood looking at the lugger. "I think I know that vessel: she carries twelve six-pounders and two brass nines, with a crew, including officers, but little short of a hundred. They will have an immense advantage over the boats with the nine-pounders, if they point them well."

"I have no fear for my lads," returned Yorick, "and the nine-pounders won't have long to play with them." He wetted the tips of his fingers with his tongue, and held them up. "Ah, by George! but there's an air of wind aloft, though there's not a breath upon the face of the ocean. See! the royals and skysels are filled;" and tearing a piece of paper which he pulled from his pocket, he threw a fragment over the quarter: it fluttered for an instant, then fell dead upon the water, and remaining stationary, the vessel evidenced the progress she made by passing it at rather more than a knot an hour.

Neither officers nor seamen had anything to do, and the utmost excitement prevailed as the little armament pulled steadily towards the object of attack, which was plying her sweeps with rapidity, and travelling at no less than three knots, whilst the boats were making about double that number of miles.

"There go the nine-pounders!" said Belliaud, as a wreath of smoke curled up from the lugger's stern; and Yorick quickly glanced his eye at the boats. The shot fell short, and the experiment was not immediately repeated. In about five minutes, however, a second cloud obscured the lugger, and this time the shot struck the water close to the small cutter, throwing the spray over the boat; but the men pulled steadily on, without giving the slightest heed that they were now within range. Another shot fell about half a dozen fathoms ahead of the launch, then rose again, passed closely over their heads, dropped astern, and spent itself in playing at "ducks and drakes."

"Those fellows have had good practice," said Yorick, as a certain undefinable sensation crept upon his heart lest any of the boats should get hit. "But never mind; Spicer will give the —— a taste of the carronade presently: and your privateer's-men, though they come from the Garonne, are not over fond of grape."

Again the smoke curled up from the lugger, and, as if the commander had heard the remark of Yorick, a shower of grape from the nine-pounders fell ahead, but in a line with the

flotilla, and throwing up the water like a shoal of flying-fish off Barbadoes. Still the boats, uninjured, continued to pull steadily on, each preserving its position in a line close ahead and astern, the launch leading them; but no return was made to the fire of the privateer. A few minutes more, and again the grape was seen dashing up the spray close to the launch; and the captain observed through his glass, with pain, that two oars lay idle in the rowlocks: the poor fellows had fallen, but their places were instantly supplied by a couple of marines, and the launch held on her way as if nothing had happened.

"Brave fellows!" uttered Captain Belliaud. "With such gallant souls, I fear I shall have to meet my countrymen yet."

"Lord love you!" said the master, "they thinks no more of a shot than I do of an ingon. Here, young gentleman," turning to Parker, "take a look through my glass at your shipmates, and watch the next discharge."

The little fellow did as he was bid; nor had he long to wait, for the grape flew over the boats, dancing and skimming along till spent, and then they were added to the accumulated heaps in that vast shot-locker—the ocean; or,

as the boatswain observed, Davy Jones would have a few more beads for his young devils. "Pray, what do you think of that, Mr. Parker?" asked old Stowage.

"Oh, that's nothing, sir!" answered the youngster, smiling. "Our school once stood another school with stones,—and they're as hard as shot,—and we beat 'em just as Mr. Spicer will do the lugger presently. See, Mr. Stowage, there goes the gun in the launch."

"Hand me my glass, boy," said the veteran impatiently, as he jumped upon one of the quarter-deck carronades; and Parker instantly obeyed.

"Short! short!" exclaimed Yorick. "Spicer's not yet within range; a few minutes more, and he'll pay 'em back a few of their compliments. I see old Blocks is becoming busy too: he wants to give them a taste of that iron-pot of his, but he's too good a judge to begin too soon. There goes the lugger again!"

In an instant everything on board the frigate was hushed, for the spectacle became of the most animating and exciting nature to those who had no share in the encounter. The shots again fell harmless, and the hum of

many voices united in one general cheer came swelling upon the surface of the glassy sea.

"Mr. Stowage, keep your eye upon the lugger," said the captain. "Spicer is going to attempt it again, and I think he 'll pitch the iron aboard this time. Ay, there he tries his range. Hurrah! well done! my fine fellow! By ——, but he 's knocked away the chips, and down comes the lugger's mizen."

Again the distant hum of voices reached the frigate. Yorick in his ecstasy waved his hat; and first one, and then another hurrah was heard, till it swelled into a general chorus fore and aft, and the Scratchee's decks echoed to the thrilling sound of British cheers.

"*Sacré!*" exclaimed Belliaud with deep mortification. "Monsieur, your countrymen must win."

"To be sure they will," answered Yorick, entering most amply into the spirit-stirring scene; "most undoubtedly they will! I never thought otherwise. Mind the boats, Mr. Stowage; the privateer is pulling round to get his broadside to bear;" and scarcely were the words uttered, before the vessel was enveloped in smoke, and the captain's voice was again heard — "What do you see, Mr. Stowage?"

"The small cutter has been struck, sir, and

the bow-oars are laid in," answered the master; "but I do not think any one is hurt."

"I see, I see," said Yorick, speaking in an under tone to himself; "and now the pinnace is closing with them — the oars are tossed — they are alongside; — there 's one poor fellow lifted in, wounded — wounded. The boat is abandoned — hurrah! pinnace gives way again.—What the devil are you about, Spicer? — speak, man! and grape for your life. — Ah, he hears me! Well done, my boy! that's let daylight into his 'tween decks — and presently Blocks will whisper a word or two."

A round shot from the launch's eighteen-pounder had crashed into the lugger's quarter about two feet above the water-line; and as she heaved in the swell, the liquid element rushed in so as to render it necessary for a couple of men to be slung over to patch up the hole. But the supposed nine-pounders used as stern-chasers were not idle, and the contest grew every moment more and more animated, so as to produce the most lively emotions amongst the spectators: round and grape skimmed along the surface, sometimes striking the summit of the swell, and glancing off again like a bird wetting its wings. The admirable and closely-formed line preserved by

the boats (all except the sinking small cutter that lay alone and deserted) rendered it difficult to hit them, especially as the quick motion of the lugger prevented a steady aim.

"The pinnace is drawing out, sir," said Stowage, addressing the captain. "Blocks is forud in her bows — she 's clear of the line— and there goes the twelve-pounder: look out for the splinters, for never did gunner throw a better shot."

"Well done, Blocks!" shouted the captain; "bravely planted! grape slap through the bulwarks just above the deck; — admirably timed! just as she was winding to bring her broadside to bear. What are they about in the launch?—Play up, Spicer!—you son of a gun! — you seem to have forgot your mother-tongue. Watch the effect of the lugger's fire; — no harm done that I can see. There bellows the eighteen; but the enemy is in the thick of the smoke, and what mischief she gets must be shared out amongst them."

Sometimes the boats, and at other times the privateer, were totally enveloped in the thick smoke, which, as there was no wind, settled down heavily on the water; but they soon emerged from the density, as the propelling power was kept in operation, though now the distance had

increased so much from the frigate that they could only be seen through the vapour they left in their track. The boats neared the enemy fast, and musketry was called into play.—But we will for a short time quit the frigate and join the flotilla. Mr. Spicer, in the launch with twenty men, had the chief command; Mr. Blocks, with eighteen men, was in the pinnace; Mr. Macdonald, the master's mate, already mentioned as the caterer of the young gentlemen's mess, had the large cutter with twelve men; and our hero was in the small cutter with ten men,—thus making a total of four officers and sixty stout seamen and marines, well armed and eager for the affray. Onward they pulled, keeping close together; and the first shot from the privateer reminded them that they were approaching the debateable ground, and would soon go to work in earnest. The grape that entered the launch killed one man outright, and disabled another; but, as we have before stated, their places were instantly supplied by a couple of marines, and the dead and the wounded lay side by side in the bottom of the boat.

"Give way, my boys in the cutters!" shouted Mr. Spicer as he went forward to superintend the carronade. "Hurrah!" was the re-

sponse, and the men bent gallantly to their oars. The gunner had frequently looked astern to see how his protegé got on; but he could make out very little, except that the small cutter, being an old and heavy-pulling boat, was at times left considerably in the rear, and delayed the rest, who were compelled to wait for her. Such was the case when a round shot entered her bows at the water-line, and tore out the breadth of two planks, took the bow-man's leg just below the knee, and passed out over the quarter. The gunner became immediately aware of what had happened, hailed the launch, and then pulled short round to rescue the poor fellows from the sinking wreck. Ten-thousand was about to spring into the pinnace as soon as she got alongside; but the gunner waved him back, and uttered, with a frown, "Avast, young gentleman! — there's a wounded man." The youngster felt the reproof and remained till every one had quitted the cutter, when he also left her to her fate, and the pinnace not only resumed a proper station in the line, but pulled up close to the launch's quarter, for half the rescued men to board.

"Well, Ten," said the gunner, addressing his protegé, whilst at the same time he was

folding up his silk neckerchief to apply it by way of tourniquet to the shattered leg of the unfortunate fellow, who had been removed from the small cutter, and now was extended at full length in the stern-sheets of the pinnace,— "Well, Ten, how do you like the whistling of shot—eh?" A shower of grape at that moment hurtled in the air above them, with that peculiar half hiss, half whistle, which may be heard but not described. "Pretty music, arn't it, and somut different to psalm-singing!—But here, lend us a hand, Ten, to clap this *turn-again* upon the fag eend of poor Jack's lower stanchion." The youth, with sickly sensation at the sight of the mangled and bleeding limb, complied. "Now, don't be awkward, youngster, but larn how it's done: — there, gently, so, Ten — gently, so, and mind and don't let him go by the run.—Cheer up, heart! Jack, you 'll get a cook's warrant and sarve out burgoo yet. Lord love you! about twenty inches or two foot of timber 'll set you all square again by-and-by. — Don't look at me, coxsun, but pay heed to your steering; and hand the young gentleman the spare tiller out of the box: — There, lay hould of it jolly, and bear a hand—it may be your turn next." The marine received the spare tiller from the

coxswain and passed it to Ten-thousand ; whilst the gunner took two turns with the rolled-up neckerchief round the stump, and loosely knotted the ends ;—he then placed the spare tiller through the slack bight, and using it by way of heaver, he screwed every part of the bandage tight. During this process, which was executed with the most perfect coolness, as if it was a mere ordinary act of daily occurrence, the gunner continued a running colloquy.—"Lay hould of the other side, Ten, and heave handsomely and steadily, so as to give time for the turns to render." The poor fellow groaned, and the youth trembled, which brought a stern look from his patron. "Handsomely, Ten—handsomely, and don't shake the heaver, for it hurts him poor, fellow! Have you got a bit of sanctum smearum in the boat, any of you? for them turns won't render kindly." Some tallow was handed to him from the box, which he applied to the deputy tourniquet as if he had been merely clapping a seizing upon the fag end of a shroud. "Now heave again, Ten ; and lay quiet, Jack, there's a good sowl! I'll stop the *confusion* of blood directly. Now, suppose you had left him in the cutter, Ten! Never be the first to quit your craft when she's in danger,—no disparagement to you

now, my lad, for I dare say you didn't think of it, for it was somut in the latitude of what the larned calls a *slapsis lingo*." Another groan from the wounded seaman; and as the arteries and veins became narrowed by compression, the blood spirted out in little gushes as fine as a thread. "Ah, I know you must feel it, Jack, but still we must fish it just to sarve yourself; and I 'm bless'd if I don't come and see you at Grinage, when you gets your iron-bound long togs and a three-cornered scraper." — Another flight of both round and grape swept past them; but the men took but little notice, bending to their oars with the same undaunted, carelessness as if they had been pulling into Sallyport from Spithead. A report from the launch's eighteen-pounder, however, operated very differently; the moment it was heard, loud cheers ascended, and the boats' crews seemed more eager to get into the thick of the action.

"The shot has fell short about half a cable's length," said the coxswain to the gunner, who never raised his head from his occupation.

"Then there 's a cartridge expended and eighteen pound of iron thrown away to no purpose," grumbled Blocks. "Give way, my lads! stick her nose right in the launch's

starn, and let her smell the powder." He then went on in a lower tone—"No, no, Ten, never leave the craft you command whilst there 's a man aboard and the planks will hould together. Log it down in your memory, my boy, that an officer must never have no thought for his own safety till he sees his men out of danger."

Ten-thousand was abashed; he felt the blood rush to his cheeks and tinge them with a deep suffusion. "I *will* remember it, sir," said he, "and I take great shame to myself for having been so heedless and deficient in my duty just now."

"All very proper," continued the gunner, applying a piece of tarred parcelling to the mangled flesh of the sufferer, and binding it up with a handkerchief; "but don't heed it just now, and keep close to me in boarding, that you may live and larn. Grasp your cutlash with a taut grip, and keep a free arm: but don't be rash or hasty, cutting away from starboard to port, and from port to starboard, without having any particular object in view; but keep yourself cool, with a steady eye and a good guard, till you catch an opportunity to make your blow tell. You must be able to hit pretty smart by this time, Ten:

and mind, the head and face are the best points of assault for a cutlash—though a heavy stroke just about the wrist or elbow of the sword-arm, if well laid on, generally disables a fellow, unless he 's left-handed; but, at all events, it gives you an advantage." Another shot from the launch stopped his utterance for a moment.

"Slap into the lugger's counter, Mr. Blocks!" cried the coxswain. "I 'm bless'd! but that 's digging for daylight, anyhow!"

"Mind your helm, Johnson," said the gunner; but three hearty cheers resounded, and were responded to by the frigate. As soon as silence was restored, the gunner went on, as he carefully laid the shattered limb on some jackets that were spread beneath, and then propped the poor fellow's head with others,—"There, Jack, I can do no more for you: keep quiet, my lad."

"Water — a little water, Mr. Blocks," feebly uttered the almost exhausted seaman; "for the love of God, a little water."

"Is there any water in the boat?" inquired the kind-hearted gunner, and was answered in the negative. "There is none, Jack," continued he: "but a few minutes more, and we shall get plenty in the privateer:—mayhap with a dash of what the French call 'O Davy!' in

it.—Now look at that *turnagain*, Ten—every part does its proper duty,—but what 's the use, Ten, of mangling a poor devil, when it 's best, if you can, to be marciful and put him out of his misery at once, especially when your enemy 's no better than a privateer's-man? 'Cause why, my boy? Now, there 's poor Jack, there, as smart a topman as ever crossed a t'gal'nt yard, and see how he 's hove down on his beam-ends; but, seeing as he 's in the sarvice of his king and country, instead of being cast adrift to shift for himself, he 'll have a pension and a snug berth for life: but your privateer's-man belongs to nobody, and if he loses a limb or gets his dead-lights closed in, there he is, kicked about like a ten-weeks' chaw, without pension, most likely without friends. So, d' ye mind, Ten, when you uses your pistols, don't get flusterated and flabbergasted, but take a steady aim at the head or the heart, and do the job at once." Again the shot flew about them in every direction, striking and splintering the blades of the oars, but without doing any further injury. "There comes the grape again!" continued the gunner: "them lubbers have got some pretty pieces in that craft, but, Lord love you! they don't know how to use 'em. Now, if a hindividual I could

name was ounly at the breech of them there guns—and they 're brass by the ring of 'em—there 's no snakes in Virginny, but somebody wouldn't have nothing to boast of.—Give way, men! Mr. Spicer is giving 'em the marbles; let me see what our ould pitch-kettle is made of."

Blocks rose from his seat—coolly scanned the aspect of affairs—then leisurely stepping from thwart to thwart, he got forward to the twelve-pounder, ran his eye along the sight, and seated himself in the bows. The advice given to Ten-thousand by his patron, now that he was sitting alone with no one to speak to, came most painfully across his ruminations. He was about to enter — nay, had actually entered upon deadly warfare, and his hand was soon to be raised in personal encounter against the life of a fellow-creature—that very life that had emanated from the DEITY; and it was equally probable, that before another hour had elapsed, he might himself be hurried into the presence of his Maker. It was true, he had no parental home to which his thoughts could revert—he had no relatives either to mourn his death, or who would suffer by his loss: but then there was the pleasant parsonage, the affectionate clergyman and his wife—and there was dear little Eu-

genia!—Was there no one else? Ten-thousand cast his eyes forward, and met the earnest but placid gaze of his generous benefactor, and conscience smote him that he had not sufficiently taken the noble-minded man into his grateful consideration.

"Starboard a little!" shouted the gunner; "draw her out just clear of the launch, Johnson, so that I may try our range;—though, if my eye doesn't very much deceive me, I shall stick some of their spoons in the wall. Starboard a little, now;—there, steady, steady—port a bit, with a small helm." He held the match in his hand, watched the motion of the boat, and when the gun attained its proper bearings, he was about to fire, but observed the lugger yawing in her course for the purpose of opening her broadside. When the privateer's quarter became exposed, he let fly, and the effect upon the enemy proved how destructive had been the aim: they could both hear and see the crashing bulwarks, whilst piercing shrieks and yells told a tale of mangled limbs, death, and carnage. The pinnace hastily pulled into the line again, but not before the lugger's six-pounders came rattling amongst them; and one of the marines sitting by the side of our hero was struck in the head, carrying away the whole

of the upper part of his skull, and leaving a shattered countenance that bore no resemblance to humanity. The man sat a moment supported by the convulsive clutch with which he held his musket upright between his knees; the next instant he would have fallen prostrate upon the unfortunate topman in the stern-sheets — but the youngster caught hold of one arm, and a comrade grasped the other, and eased the body gently down, and it was dragged in under the thwarts.

"You'll want the jolly's magazine and baganet, Mr. Blocks," said the coxswain; "so you'd better haul him out again and secure it. We shall get to small arms, I take it, presently, and we shall need to sarve out plums for the duff."

The corporal crept down and released the cartouch-box and bayonet, which he handed aft, and then streaked out the limbs of the dead. The launch again fired, and down came the privateer's main-lug by the run, falling upon the men and preventing them from plying the sweeps. Up rose a cheer from the boats, and away they stretched out again like tantalized lions, eager to rush upon the foe. The lugger ceased sweeping, but left the sweeps out, and lashed them so as to prevent the boats getting

alongside. All hands were actively engaged in preparing for defence at close quarters; the boarding-nettings were quickly triced up, and the nine-pounders and musketry made sad havoc amongst the British. But the lugger was now no longer under control, and the carronades in the two boats were loaded and fired with the most efficient precision.

"Catch hould of the jolly's musket, Ten," shouted the gunner to the astonished lad, who, having nothing to do, was contemplating the carnage with shuddering horror. "Aim steady, my boy, and don't throw a charge away."

The youngster handled the weapon, and seeing one of the lugger's people busy in the main rigging seizing up the upper chain of the netting, he pointed the musket at him with a nervous quickness, pulled the trigger, and closed his eyes as he felt the recoil.

"I'm bless'd but you're a good marksman, Mr. Blocks!" said the coxswain. "You knock'd that gull off his perch in prime style, howsomever."

"Pretty fair for a beginning, young gentleman!" shouted the gunner. "You won't have him to contend against when you get aboard. Load, my boy, and try again."

A sickly tremor came over the youth at these

intimations of his having destroyed a human being; but it quickly passed away: the deed of blood had been perpetrated, the Rubicon was passed, and something like ferocity curdled up all the kindlier emotions of the heart. He plied his musket at every opportunity, and scarcely ever missed.

They were now rapidly cleaving the water and nearing the lugger, when Mr. Spicer hailed the pinnace. "Mr. Blocks," said he, "take the cutter with you, and board, where you can, abaft. I shall pull under the bows, and meet you on the deck. The cutlass and pistol must decide it; and, hurrah, my lads! let Captain Yorick see what you can do. Give them another taste of the carronade, Blocks, and load with grape and canister."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the gunner, and then repeated the orders to Macdonald astern. The master's-mate had sat perfectly at his ease from the moment they quitted the frigate; indeed, part of the time he had indulged himself with a comfortable snooze, unawakened by the firing, and unmindful of the shot. His boat had escaped all casualties, and when he shook off his lethargy, he rose up like a giant refreshed by sleep. Such encounters were no novelty to him—he looked upon them as a

portion of the routine of duty, the same as mixing the grog or stowing the hold; there was a regular way of doing it, and he was so rigid a disciplinarian that he would have shoved his head to the muzzle of a two-and-thirty pounder whilst the match was at the priming, provided he had a written order in his pocket. But poor Macdonald had a failing which opposed a barrier to all his hopes of promotion. He was an excellent seaman, a clever officer, and recklessly brave, when sober; but place the *creature* in his way, and Mac would get drunk. Entreaties, persuasions, threats, remonstrances were of no avail, and but for his abominable propensity to liquor he might have been high upon the list of lieutenants, with every prospect of rising through his own merit to the very top of the tree; but Mac *would* get drunk, and therefore Mac at the age of thirty-four was still "a young gentleman."—On receiving his orders, the master's-mate took a survey of the lugger; told the coxswain, "as soon as the boats separated, to place the cutter under the starboard side of the lugger's stern, where the mizen-gear was hanging over;" called to the men "to be ready to follow him;" sat himself down again, laid his legs up upon the seat, folded his arms,

and looked on apparently with as much unconcern—perhaps with more unconcern—than he would have done if entering a church.

The boats were now close to the enemy, and the musket-balls flew like hail-stones, wounding and slaying; the carronades were discharged for the last time, and their effect was most deadly. Each boat then took its station; the nettings were cut through or surmounted, and the battle commenced on the enemy's deck. The pinnace ran under the larboard-counter: Blocks made a spring at the taffrail as the vessel set abaft, but was instantly knocked back again; the second spring he was more successful, and brandishing his cutlass, he was soon in the heat of fight. Ten-thousand could not perform the same manœuvre; but he scrambled on board by aid of a rope and Johnson the coxswain, and rushing towards his patron, he found him engaged with three or four Frenchmen, one of whom had poised his half-pike, and would have passed it through the gunner's body, but the boy dashed the muzzle of his pistol in the Frenchman's face, sprung the trigger, and the brains of his opponent were scattered on the deck.

"Well behaved, Ten, my boy!" shouted Blocks; "you 're a good lad and follows

adwice: remember the head or the heart." The latter word was uttered with considerable energy, for at the same moment the gunner's bayonet was thrust with a giant's strength through the heart of an unfortunate whose pistol had missed fire. The men were soon assembled abaft, and a shout forward proclaimed that Mr. Spicer and his party had reached the deck. But they found no enemy to contest the possession; every Frenchman had jumped below, and the lugger was in the hands of the British tars.

Every part fore and aft, now that the conflict had ceased, presented to the eyes of the boarders a most horrible spectacle, the dead and dying lying stretched out like the carnage of a slaughter-house. But scarcely had the blood which flowed in deadly hostility rallied back to the heart and rendered it once more human — scarcely had the English time to contemplate the havoc that had been made, when sheets of flame burst out in amidships round the mainmast, and the mainlug was discovered to be on fire in several places.

"Was it not for losing so fine a craft," said the first-lieutenant, "I would shove off with the boats, and leave these scoundrels to work for their lives—sink or swim. But we must

carry her into Plymouth; so out knives, men, and cut away."

"Avast, avast, if you please, Mr. Spicer," exclaimed Blocks. "Let 's launch yard and all overboard, holus bolus: then we shall have a clear deck."

The suggestion was attended to; but the flames were so fierce and raged so violently that it was impossible either to cut away the sail or move the yard, and the deck had become ignited so as to threaten destruction to the privateer, whose men were coming up the forescuttle, and refused to render any assistance in stopping the ravages of the devastating element.

"Hand us half a dozen cartridges out of the pinnace," shouted the gunner; and Macdonald in a few minutes passed a couple of boxes to him. "Now then, if you please, Mr. Spicer, to call all hands away from the fire. We 'll make devil fight devil."

"What are you going to do, Blocks?" inquired the first-lieutenant. "Keep that powder back."

"Why, if you please to call the people off, sir," answered the gunner, holding the cartridge-boxes wrapped up in seamen's jackets, "and let 'em get anything and everything

that 'll hould a cupful of water, I 'll be bound to dowse the fire in no time. But they must bear a hand about it, sir."

Higher and higher rose the flames, snapping and cracking, and curling round the mast and shrouds like blazing serpents, in defiance of the exertions of the English seamen to suppress them. The lieutenant issued the necessary orders, and Blocks giving a couple of cartridges to Mr. Spicer, keeping two himself, and placing other two in the hands of Macdonald, pointed out the spots where it would be necessary to pitch them. "Look out now," said the gunner: "we must heave together; and lay down on your faces, men, but be ready to throw water or stamp out the burning pieces.—Now then, Muster Spicer, heave!"

The cartridges were thrown with accurate precision, the explosions were simultaneous: the burning sail was blown to atoms, and down came the mainmast over the starboard-side, whilst the fiery fragments were scattered or thrown into the air, so that at a distance it might be supposed (and this was actually the case on board the frigate) that the lugger had blown up. The moment after the explosion, the men sprang up; water was plentifully supplied in buckets, hats, and everything that

could be rendered available, and as the whole worked with a will, in the course of a few minutes all apprehensions of danger had subsided. Two half-consumed bodies were found near the stump of the mainmast.

The ship was now six or seven miles distant, but with a light air of wind that slipped her along about two knots an hour. Mr. Spicer therefore placed the severely wounded of both nations in the launch, and despatched Mr. Macdonald with her to the frigate. The casualties had been great: of the British, six were killed, and fourteen wounded; the privateer had seventeen killed, and forty-seven wounded. As soon as this was performed, the wreck of the mainmast was cleared away, sheers were promptly rigged, the stump was got out, and the upper part of the mast not being much shattered, one of the carpenter's crew quickly shaped a heel, and in two hours it was again ataunto, the rigging shortened and set up, and a small fore-lug made all ready for setting.

The captain of the privateer was a bold, resolute fellow, though a little dapper man with more of the manners of a *petit-maître* than the characteristic demeanour of a seaman. He had presented his gold-hilted sword to Mr.

Spicer with a thorough dancing-master's bow, and at the same time declared his utter ignorance as to the firing of the mainsail, which he strongly condemned as having been perpetrated without his commands or sanction. He complimented the British officers on their achievement, shed tears at the loss he had sustained, but laughed most heartily at the means employed to *blow* out the fire, and directed the attention of his captors to some choice claret in one of the lockers. His brass nines were especial favourites with him; he embraced them in his arms, and even went so far as to kiss them—then again fell to weeping at the thoughts of parting with such treasures;—in fact, such a strange compound of bravery and balderdash, of true courage and foppery, was scarcely ever met with, and never but in a Frenchman. His dress was a mixture of finery and filth: he wore wooden shoes, with remarkably fine but soiled silk stockings; coarse grey cloth knee-breeches, with richly-chased gold buckles; a dirty figured satin waistcoat, and an enormous frill to his shirt; a coat of taffeta cut court-fashion, with large buttons on the sleeves and laps; and a red woollen cap upon his head. Such was the revolutionist—adhering with all his soul to the frippery of

fashion, yet, for the sake of his body, adopting some of the republican manners. He could not speak one word of English, and all his fine harangues would have been lost, (for Mr. Spicer and Blocks were equally innocent of French,) had it not been for Ten-thousand, who translated for him. The crew were pretty much of the same character as those in the "Commerce de L'Orient;" most of them desperate fellows, with the galling marks of the gyves still upon them.

The lugger at length caught the breeze, and got her head round towards the captured vessel, which, the privateer's men informed him, was an English West Indiaman from Jamaica. The frigate, observing that her intentions had been anticipated, stood also for the prize, which was making off but very slowly; and just as a lovely evening slumbered into night, the pinnace had captured the Kingston of four hundred tons, laden with sugar, molasses, and rum.

The second and third lieutenants were already away in prizes; Mullion and Ancell also were gone in chasse-marées, and, unfortunately, Macdonald could not be trusted; Acheson was in the sick-list; and there was no alternative but to send the master and one of the youngsters in the lugger, whilst the

gunner and his protegé took charge of the West-Indiaman. But Captain Yorick was now, on account of the number of his prisoners and the shortness of his own hands, compelled to run for Plymouth also, taking his prizes in company. At the entrance to the Channel they encountered a thick fog with light winds, so that the vessels entirely lost sight of each other; and during the same night a heavy squall was succeeded by a gale of wind, and it required all the laborious exertions of the people in the Kingston to get the sail in; nor was it effected till the fore-topsail was blown completely away, and the mizen-topsail split to ribbons.

This was the first gale young Blocks had been in, and, to do him justice, he behaved extremely well, working with and encouraging the men: but it was a mere summer spurt—a few hours' hard puff and over; for by the time they had got everything snug, the wind lulled, the sea went down, and they were compelled to remain on deck and make sail again. A beautiful daylight grew out of the stormy night, and at its first opening Ten-thousand enjoyed a glorious spectacle. The sky near the verge of the horizon resembled in colour what is known amongst anchor-smiths as a

white-heat, and, standing out in strong relief, about five miles distant from the West-Indiaman, appeared seventeen sail of the line, nine frigates, two sloops, two cutters, and a lugger, in all the pride and pomp of war; whilst another frigate and a lugger were approaching to speak them;—the exact line in which they were sailing and their distance from each other was so well preserved, that it drew forth a burst of enthusiastic admiration from young Blocks, which was communicated to his patron, whose heart glowed in his breast "to see," as he said, "the younker take to the sarvice so kindly."

The ship and the lugger distinct from the fleet were soon made out to be the Scratchee and her prize, and Blocks by aid of his glass ascertained that one of the three-deckers carried white at the main, two of them red at the fore, and a two-decker blue at the mizen; in fact, it was Earl Howe's fleet, his lordship having under him Vice-admirals Sir Alexander Hood and Thomas Graves, and Rear-admiral John Macbride, and they were going to look for the French fleet from which Captain Yorick had so recently escaped.

The Scratchee spoke the admiral, and a

fine breeze continuing, the frigate and her two prizes were on the following morning safe anchored at Plymouth, where also the Commerce de L'Orient and the chasse-marées had previously arrived.

CHAPTER V.

" I am a gay and sprightly lad,
But just come home from sea, sir."
Sea Song.

WHATEVER passed between Acheson and Dubois subsequent to the suspicions that had been excited, the former faithfully persevered in keeping the secret of the latter, though apparently all communication had ceased between them; and as Acheson had pretty well recovered and the frigate was short of officers, he was pronounced by the surgeon able to do day-duty. Imperious and overbearing, he was but little esteemed either by officers or men, except that a similarity of feeling had induced the second-lieutenant, Mr. Watts, to take more notice of him than any one else. It is a misfortune peculiar to some minds, that conviction is closed against everything but a sense of their own individuality—or, in other words, they fancy that all they do or say is right, and the rest of the world lies grovelling in error;

as we remember hearing Dr. Spurzheim once say of a gentleman who would never yield to any argument, however conclusive, " he ash de bomp of shelf-consheit vera large." Such was the case with Acheson; and though a fear of corporeal suffering might influence him so as to prevent his undertaking what he had set his mind upon performing, yet nothing could operate to persuade him that wrong *was* wrong if he desired to perpetrate it. He had, almost from the first hour of his embarkation, imbibed a strong prejudice against our hero, and without endeavouring to investigate its origin— it was sufficient for him that it was so, and therefore he cherished the dislike with as much bitterness as he could have done, had Ten-thousand been his most inveterate foe. This was greatly increased by the circumstances that subsequently transpired, and instead of viewing his disgrace with the captain and the pain he had suffered by his fall as the result of his own misconduct, he attributed the whole solely to young Blocks, whom he now hated with the most cordial hatred.

A great number of the prisoners were removed on the day of the Scratchee's arrival; but several (amongst whom was Dubois) were unavoidably detained till the ensuing day.

Captain Yorick had closely questioned several of the captives relative to Dubois; but though many of them knew him as *un mauvais sujet*, none could precisely fix the place of his birth; though several believed that he was a native of Bordeaux, where his relatives still resided, and were in respectable and affluent circumstances, but they had cast off the prisoner for his mal-practices. The conflicting nature of the accounts he received, though they did not alter the opinion of the captain, yet deterred him from making an open accusation; but he determined that the suspected individual should be sent on board the guard-ship, where it was probable he might be recognised. But the next morning, on mustering the prisoners, Dubois did not make his appearance, and though every part of the ship was thoroughly searched—every nook and corner carefully examined, yet he was nowhere to be found, and what had become of him was a mystery that no one could or would solve. The different marines who had been posted during the night were separately questioned and put under confinement with menaces of punishment, but no light whatever was thrown upon the subject. The officers who had kept the watches, as well as the quartermasters, declared their utter

ignorance of the manner in which he could have escaped; and Mr. Acheson, who had been on deck during the greater part of the day till dark hour, strongly protested that he had not seen him since the first detachment of prisoners had left the frigate. There certainly was a chance that he had disembarked with the others; but this was speedily decided, for several had spoken to him at some hours subsequent, on the main-deck, forecastle, and even the quarter-deck.

Captain Yorick was excessively mortified; but he was too upright a man to punish where no proof of guilty connivance could be obtained, and other and more important duties occupying his attention, the affair was passed over; and he was the more readily induced to this by hearing that a dead body had been picked up between Drake's Island and the main, the description of which corresponded with the dress and person of Dubois; so that it was probable the prisoner had slipped overboard during darkness for the purpose of attempting his escape, and had been drowned in his attempt to reach the shore: in other words, as Yorick expressed it, "he had saved the expending of a piece of new rope." All doubts as to his being a traitor were at an end.

Mr. Acheson solicited leave of absence for home to recruit his health, which was promptly granted, with an intimation from the captain that he need be in no hurry to join again, and perhaps a voyage to some milder climate would be most conducive to his recovery. The young man took the hint, applied for and obtained his discharge into the guard-ship at Spithead; and when his traps were lowered into the boat which was to convey him to a gun-brig whose commander had given him a passage round to Portsmouth, no one regretted his departure, and little Parker danced about half mad with joy.

Ten-thousand also obtained leave; but it was only for a few hours. He had continued in charge of the prize, and his general good conduct had gained him the encouragement of his commander's approbation—and none knew better the how and the when to address the best feelings of the human heart than Yorick; he seemed to enter into every one's peculiarities—was rigid and stern, and sometimes punished to excess where he deemed it requisite to make an example (for that was a main point with him); but he never neglected merit, however humble the individual who possessed it, and he never abandoned one whom he had taken

by the hand as long as his conduct was deserving of patronage. At this time he was a young man not six-and-twenty years of age, devotedly attached to his profession, full of energy and resolution, but in most instances tempered with a happy discretion. As he was the experienced practical seaman afloat, so also he entered with a reckless spirit into all the peculiar characteristics of men-of-war's men ashore. At the theatre, the midnight spree, or the practical joke, none could equal him; and as he never left his companions in the lurch, he was beloved and trusted by them all. Such was the individual who had promised Ten-thousand that "if he continued as he had begun, he shouldn't want a kick in the stern to lift him up the rattlins of promotion."

"Well now, my lad," — said the gunner to his protegé, "you 're bound ashore on liberty, here 's a ten-pounder," (giving him a note to that amount,) "on one Abraham Newlander.— Don't make ducks and drakes of it, Ten, nor yet be niggardly. Buy some present for the parson, — not a *hand-bible*, my boy," added he laughingly, "but somut as you think will please his natur, as a token of respect. Never overhaul long yarns about gratitude for past favours — them are mere words, but show it in

your actions, Ten, — show it in your actions. —Then there 's his wife, — the women loves a bit of a kick-shaw !—not forgetting young miss. Ah ! you sly rogue, conscience has hoisted her colours on your cheeks;—but no matter—she 's a kind-hearted wench, though she is a Dutchman, — I mean woman — that is, girl.—Well, Ten, ould Jigamaree, the button-hole darner, will rig you out, and your uniform will be ready by this time. — But, I say my boy, keep clear of pirates, and look out for squalls, 'specially 'mong the blow 'uns. Give 'em a wide berth, Ten, and don't be caught by their flying gear aloft, and the galimancoes below: — they carry a taut press going before it, Ten; but, Lord love your heart ounly just clap 'em on a wind, and they 'll go to looard like a bag of sand. — Have a bright eye about you, my boy; and if any of your 'long-shore folk gets to pitching their palaver about ' sir' and ' yer honour,' mark my word but they 're sharks, with every row o' teeth ready to make a grab at you :— there 's keen uns cruising about the latitudes of them there streets, looking out for a bite — male and female, cocks and hens, my boy. — Just call on Muster Brief, and give the ould gemman a hail; — he 'll be pleased to hear of your good luck — I mean about the prizes, for

there 'll be two or three hundred — money I mean, for you to receive. Make my salaam to him, and say Muster Blocks, the gunner of his Majesty's ship Scratchee, will haul alongside of his proclamation-box — though I thinks they call it secketary — as soon as possible. Tell the parson I sha'n't be able to see him this here cruise, unless he 'll bring the lady out — and I 'll get Mr. Spicer to let me have the jolly-boat; — I 'm saying, unless he comes with his lady to visit the frigate. Do all my best manners to him, Ten, and give the little Dutchman a kiss for me. Ah, you sly rogue! you grin at that, do you! Well, well—there, make sail and be a good lad: and I say, Ten, don't forget any o' your ould friends, though mayhap they may shake a cloth in the wind; —a trifle well bestowed may be a blessing to many a child of sorrow. —There, be off, and don't come aboard again with a single copper left." The boy held out his hand. "Oh, ay, to be sure, give us your fin, my fine fellow." And as young Ten-thousand hurried away to the boat, his benefactor added, "Lord love the youth! he 's just arter my own heart: I hope I shall live to see him posted yet."

The first board young Blocks made on landing carried him to the tailor's shop; and he

was speedily equipped in a suit of full uniform, cocked hat, and dirk, and everything complete; and perhaps there was not a midshipman in the service who made a more handsome appearance. His countenance, browned by the sun and the sea-air, presented the very picture of good health and good humour; and being tall and stout for his age, he might have readily been taken for two years older than he really was.

His next place of call was the "Roaring Boreas;" and there he found the veteran Joe Breeze — his long togs with enormously large brass buttons, silver buckles in his shoes, and his chain and call round his neck — his milk-white shirt open in front, and a black neckerchief beneath the collar, loosely knotted before. There he was, in all the pride of landlordism, seated snugly in an arm-chair, in his comfortable bar (which he had made as much like a ship's cabin as possible), with a glass of grog before him, and his busy bustling wife attending to the customers, and pleased to see her husband happy.

"What cheer — what cheer, my hearty?" exclaimed Joe, rising from his seat and taking our hero by the hand with a hearty shake. "I knew you directly, though you have bent a new suit of sails. Ah, now this is all ship-

shape. I knew you'd have the 'weekly account' afore long; and a tight craft you look, young gentleman."

"Well, I declare! how he's grown!" said Mrs. Breeze, smoothing down the youth's hair as she had been accustomed to do when he was a child. "But there's the same face, howsomever; and I never yet seed a handsomer."

"—Except mine, ould gal," chimed in her lord and master. "And I 'm thinking there's the same heart too, as well as the same phisog; — arn't it, Ten?"

"I hope so, sir," answered the youth, who remembered with gratitude the numerous kind offices he had received from the worthy couple. "I should indeed be lost to feeling, could I forget the many and great kindnesses I have received at your hands."

"Now, avast there, my boy!" uttered Joe: "though it's all right and proper to remember ould friends, you shouldn't be overhauling the account afore their faces. Come, ould gal, arn't you got sumut nice for him, as you used to have?—And how's my worthy messmate Muster Blocks?"

"I left him quite well about an hour since," replied Ten-thousand; "and he purposes paying you a visit before we sail again."

"Shall be happy to have him alongside," responded Joe: "he's heart of oak every inch of him. Ah! well do I remember his first bringing you ashore in his arms to make a Christian of you, and the jovial spree we had that night! There arn't been many jollifications at a christening as ud beat your'n, young gentleman, seeing as I held the honourable post of president, and Harry Finn—ould Flipper, as they used to call him—was wice. Poor Harry! he lost the number of his mess when the ould Alfred behaved so well under Rodney, in the engagement with Count de Grasse, the day arter Captain Baynes was killed: and there warn't many more noble fellows than Harry Finn; — he was one o' your sidesmen — godfathers I think they call 'em,—when the parson named you. And I suppose you're going to pay his reverence a visit,—eh?"

"That is my intention, sir," answered our hero; "and as the walk is rather long, I hope you will not consider me disrespectful if I set out immediately."

"Shall, though," said Joe with a twist of his head. "What! come aboard the Roaring Boreas and not take so much as a pinch of salt with us? Come, come, Muster Ten, that ull never do! There's the ould gal as busy as

a cockroach in a marine's kit; she 's getting you a somut nice, my boy, to cherish the cockles of your heart, and it won't do to fall athaut her hawse. And I 'm thinking, Ten," added Joe, as he went across the bar, and opening a tin case, took something out, " I 'm thinking you 'll have a bit of a cruise ashore, now you 're an officer: and, for the sake o' the cloth, Ten, don't stand for a trifle of money to show 'em you 've got them as ull keep your head above water, and rig you out as fine as a fiddle. I don't misdoubt but my ould messmate has done everything as is handsome; but there may be, mayhaps, a few odd kickshaws as you 'd like to have, so here 's a couple o' guineas for you. Don't say a word afore the ould gal, for the more she scrapes together the less she likes to part with it; but expend it just as you please, though never forget the onfortunate in distress."

The "ould gal," as Joe called her, very soon, with the assistance of two pretty-looking handmaidens, had placed some delicacies before our hero, who, though impatient to be gone, laid in a good foundation for his journey. He then bade them farewell, and hurried to a jeweller's shop, where he purchased a pair of silver-mounted spectacles for Mr. Hector—

(whether they would suit his eyes or not never entered into Ten's calculations); a tortoiseshell case with two handsome cut-glass scent-bottles for Mrs. Hector; a brooch for Miss Caroline, the youngest of Mr. Wellmore's daughters at the Hall; and a neat gold ring set with pearls, enclosed in a red morocco box, for Eugenia; —for all which, according to the immemorial practice on jolly reefers, he paid about thirty per cent. above the usual sale price. He next repaired to a haberdasher's, where numerous little packages of laces, ribands, and other articles were soon made up, intended as presents for old acquaintances in the village; so that his ten-pound note was greatly shrunk by the time he was ready to start.

It was a lovely morning towards the close of summer; the breeze tempered the solar heat, the atmosphere was unclouded, and no painful sensation wounded the happy mind of the young midshipman as he left the busy and fetid mart of rum, grog, and pigtail-tobacco far behind him, and once more luxuriated amongst the green fields, and the ripened grain bending down to entice the sickle of the reaper. Joyous were his feelings as he listened to the blithe lark carolling its sweetest lay between heaven and earth, reminding the hearer of

both, or heard the full but plaintive notes of the blackbird perched amongst the foliage of the trees. They seemed to be pouring forth a welcome to the wanderer, and gaily he pursued his way, his very soul exulting with delight, and his heart communing with the still small voice of Nature issuing from her works. There was pride too, an honest pride, swelling in his breast, as his eyes glanced over his handsome uniform, the dirk suspended by his side, and a smart cocked-hat, which he frequently unshipped for the purpose of cleaning it of dust. He had no glass to view his figure; but as "coming events cast their shadows before," so did his precede him, and serve as a guide to direct him in the best mode of adjusting his scraper. Yes, he was proud of being in the service of his country: but we must not omit the principal actuating sentiment which prevailed; and that was, grateful affection for those who had been to him like parents —the friends of his childhood, the individuals he had so much cause to respect and love. There was Eugenia too—the pretty Eugenia—his dear little friend and playmate, his instructor in Dutch, his pupil in English, and the sweet companion of many a happy hour. He should soon meet them—soon enjoy their

society, and his spirit glowed when he contemplated the favourable circumstances under which the meeting would take place. He was no longer a boy—an irresponsible boy, but an officer in the Royal Navy; had been in battle, and gained the esteem of his brave but eccentric commander.

Onward he trudged, his pockets stowed to repletion, and his hands nearly full, till the spire of the village-steeple greeted his sight as it reared its venerable head above the trees. Oh, what joyous associations revelled in his mind as he quickened his pace! and the last half-mile seemed to lengthen itself to double the distance. At last he entered the village: but he was not immediately recognised, on account of the alteration in his dress; but stopping at one of the cottages to dispense his gifts, the children soon spread the intelligence, and hearty were the congratulations he received on every side as he tendered his donations to the cottagers who thronged round him, chiefly females, as the husbands and fathers were busy in the fields. Ribands were streaming in the air, laces were placed around many a pretty face, silk handkerchiefs adorned the necks of the rustic belles, and for a length of time Mr. Hector had an opportunity every Sunday of

enjoying reminiscences of the young middy's bounty as the females sported their gaieties at church. As for the children, he bought the entire stock of the cake-shop, and the little laughing rogues carried off brown twelves and parliament, Adams and Eves, and lord-mayor's coaches, bull's-eyes and Nelson's balls, lollypops and barley-sugar ;—in short, every article soon vanished as if swallowed up by an earthquake, and leaving not a wreck behind. One of his guineas was left at the village public for the men when they returned from labour in the evening to refresh themselves ; the other was deposited with two females to purchase tea and sugar for the old folks ; and a third was left in the hands of others in whom he could trust, to treat the females in any way they should prefer : so that by the time his arrangements were made, his cash was nearly exhausted. No tongue was idle in the praise of the young sailor that day ; and as rumour ran that "he had fowt the French and made his fortun," several of the youth subsequently entered his majesty's service, and became clever seamen.

This business settled, our hero proceeded towards the Parsonage, where he was almost devoured by old Sarah, the house—indeed the

only maid servant (except a young girl), who laughed and cried alternately at seeing her young master "a navy midshipmite," as she called him. But neither Mr. nor Mrs. Hector were at home: they had walked over to Wellmore Hall, to request permission for Miss Caroline and Eugenia to pass a day or two at the Rectory previous to the departure of the latter for Holland, which was shortly expected to take place. Nothing could be more gratifying to the feelings of the youth than the prospect of enjoying the society of Eugenia under the worthy clergyman's roof; but he could not wait for their return, so he walked out towards the Hall.

Eugenia was indeed about to return to her native home. The French Revolution had stirred up the Northern Powers against the Republicans, an English army had taken Valenciennes; but the Terrorists had persuaded the people to rise *en masse*, and the Duke of York was defeated at Dunkirk. Everything was precarious — a feeling of enmity towards the Allies began to manifest itself amongst a certain powerful party in Holland, and the etiquette which was exacted by the Austrians was anything but favourable to the movements of an army. Under such circumstances, Eugenia's father

(her mother was in the grave) had deemed it necessary that she should be near him whatever change might occur, and she was now of an age to superintend his household affairs.

The worthy clergyman and his lady were very graciously received by Mr. Wellmore, and the requested permission granted; refreshments were provided, after partaking of which the hothouse was visited, and some choice grapes placed in a basket for conveyance to the Parsonage. The young ladies were soon ready, and accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Hector, in whose society they greatly delighted. Playful as fawns they skipped over the grass, exulting in youth, beauty, and health, till their conversation turned upon the young sailor whom they supposed far away. The exploits of the Scratchee had been communicated to them by Mr. Hector, and our hero's name had been mentioned in the public prints with commendation; for Captain Yorick made it a matter of course to give every encouragement to those who had only their own arduous endeavours to forward them in life. Great was their gratification at the prospects the youth had now before him, and Eugenia expressed an earnest hope that she should see him once more before the time arrived for her quitting

England. They had just turned the corner of the sylvan lane leading to the Rectory, and the words had scarcely escaped her lips, when she suddenly found herself clasped in the arms of a handsome young naval officer, who was by no means niggardly, as Will Blocks would have said, "in sarving out the kisses." Miss Caroline came in for the next embrace, nor did Mrs. Hector escape; but the rudeness met with no harsh reproof, for the cocked-hat had fallen from the head of the youth, and the smiling face and curly hair of Ten-thousand were instantly recognised.

"Oh, fie!" said Eugenia, "you kissa me moosh; you very fine for gentelehomme now—von wicked, bad sailors mans."

"No, Eugenia," returned Ten-thousand, "Mr. Blocks sent you *them*. I have yet got to give you mine."

"I declare, sir, you've rumpled my frock, and put all my hair in disorder," exclaimed Caroline. "But I am so pleased to see you!—how long are you going to stop?"

"I must be on board to-night," replied the youth, "as I have charge of one of the rich prizes we have taken." And Ten-thousand felt himself an important personage for the first

time in his life: it arose from a desire that his friends should think well of him.

"I am truly happy to see you safe, my young friend," said the clergyman, "and highly gratified at the mention which has been made of you in the public prints."

"Public prints, sir!" repeated Blocks in astonishment, for he knew nothing of gazettes and newspapers.

"Yes," reiterated the clergyman, "your name has been made honourable mention of in more than one instance, and we have read the accounts with mingled emotions of pain and pleasure;—pain when we thought of the dangers to which you had been exposed—pleasure at your escape from them."

To have his name in print, and seen by thousands and thousands of his countrymen classed with the brave of England's pride, was indeed an unexpected honour; and never before had the lad felt so thrilling a sensation as that which was now nearly overpowering him: — his heart swelled almost to bursting — his head swam giddily round, and a vow was registered in heaven that he would never disgrace the proud distinction which he knew his noble-minded commander had conferred upon him.

At this moment a number of the villagers turned the lane and greeted the party with cheers. The labouring men had returned home to their dinner-hour, and hearing of the youth's kindness from their wives and children, they had come in a body to thank him. He had always been an especial favourite, and they testified their joy by hearty huzzas, and shaking hands with the young officer "who had fought the French and remembered the poor." Such an exhibition was enough to make a hundred heroes.

"This is an outset in life, my young friend," said the clergyman when they were again alone and pursuing their way to the Parsonage, "that is most flattering to you; and I might fear that it would excite vanity in your breast, did I not feel certain that your principles are unchanged, and that you still remember the maxim I have so often endeavoured to inculcate, that 'to be truly great, you must be also humble.' Never forget the scene you have just witnessed: it proceeded from the spontaneous operation of kind hearts,—and to whom?—to one who has fought for his country, and shared his little wealth amongst them. You are honoured as a brave defender—you are loved as a generous disposition ought to

be. Should you on some future occasion hear the plaudits of the thousands, look back with honest pride and heartfelt gratitude to the villagers of ———."

"I will, sir—indeed I will," replied Ten-thousand. "From what I feel at this moment, I am sure I shall not show myself undeserving of your excellent instruction and the kind attention you have paid me: they have never been erased from my mind; in danger and distress, in difficulty and vexation, they have been my directory and guide."

The pious divine stopped, and gazed upon the youth with a countenance full of heavenly benevolence and soul-loving affection: it was so benign, so divested of all earthly consideration, that the boy removed his hat and stood uncovered. The hands of the herald of salvation were spread out, they descended on the head of the foundling before him, and as the crystal-drops overflowed his eyes, he solemnly and fervently uttered, "May the God of Israel bless the lad!"

A silence of several minutes ensued as the group stood in the presence of their Maker, bearing witness to the blessing dispensed by his faithful servant, and experiencing that sweet communion of spirit that passeth from heart

to heart. That was indeed a happy meeting! The youth recounted his adventures, his sea-fights, the storm; nothing was left untold. He excited their bursts of laughter—he beguiled them of their tears, and thus he continued to the period of his landing that morning, when he suddenly stopped, and a suffusion of shame flushed his cheeks as he exclaimed, "I have forgotten to call upon Mr. Brief;" but scarcely were the words uttered, when a gig drove up the avenue, and out of it alighted the very gentleman himself. He had been into the country the day before, and was now returning to town, so that Ten-thousand would have an opportunity of riding back; and at the earnest solicitations of the ladies, he agreed to wait till the evening, and not start till there was just sufficient daylight left for Ten-thousand to get on board. The little lawyer was much pleased with the youth's success, both as it respected his present station and his prize-money; and there only wanted the presence of the worthy gunner to complete as joyous a party as ever assembled.

After dinner, the young folks, leaving the lawyer and the divine deep in argument, walked over to the Hall, where Blocks was warmly

welcomed by every one, and by none more than Mr. Wellmore himself.

"And so, Eugenia," said Blocks as they were returning to the Parsonage, "you are shortly to leave England."

"Yes," returned she mournfully, (I shall depart from the broken idiom), "and perhaps, Ten-thousand, we may never meet again."

This was an unexpected suggestion to the youth. It had never struck him that there was a probability of his parting for ever from Eugenia. She who had been his dear companion and playmate—she who had listened with patience to his wailings when calling to recollection the unprotected state in which he had been cast upon the ocean, and had so often soothed his griefs and smiled away his tears,—to part with her for ever, the thing seemed utterly impossible; and yet she was going to another land, whilst he, perhaps, might be sent on foreign service. It caused a pang he could not suppress. "Do not fear, Eugenia," said he as soon as his mind was somewhat calmed; "let you be where you will, I shall not forget you, and ——. Oh yes, I feel assured that we shall have many happy meetings."

She shook her head and looked at a neat

gold ring upon her finger, bearing two united hands in a small entablature: it was the keepsake she had that day received from the young man, and in return had presented him with a locket containing her initials worked in her own hair. "I shall often think of my friends in England," uttered she, "and of the pleasant visit I have made. Here, Caroline, you will be enjoying security without fear of molestation, for neither French nor any other nation can get across the water whilst the British sailors are so brave and vigilant: but my home will be exposed to foreign armies and all the cruelties of war; — perhaps the revolution which terrified me so much in Paris may reach Holland, and, oh, how horrible will it be then!"

"But you have a father to protect you," returned the youth; "and somehow I can't help thinking the very name of relative implies a defender. Alas! I have no one with whom I can claim kindred; and though I hope I am not ungrateful for the preservation and kindness I have received, yet I feel I could almost welcome hunger, and cold, and pain, and affliction, to know and see my parents."

"Do not give way to melancholy thoughts, Ten," said the noble-minded girl, forgetting her

own sorrow to soothe that of the youth. "Come let us hope that peace will be restored, and perhaps we may often hear of one another; — at least, I hope the wretches who murdered their king will be driven back to France by your Duke of York; and then, Ten, you may likely sail to Holland, and I will be your sister."

The hour for parting at length arrived — the farewell and sincere good wishes were earnestly expressed, and away went our hero, in the little lawyer's gig, on an autumnal evening full of delightful beauties. The shades of twilight were deepening into night as Ten parted with his companion, and hastened through the streets, towards the landing-place, where he might hire a boat to get on board the ship: but just as he reached the quay some one caught hold of his arm, and, turning round, he saw Mullion and Ancell, with several midshipmen, who speedily surrounded him.

"Hallo! Blocks," cried Ancell, "where are you bound to if the wind holds? My eyes! shipmate, but you carry a taut press."

"I am going aboard, Ancell," returned the youth. "Little Parker is looking out for me whilst I am away, and I promised to return to-night."

"All my eye!" said Ancell, laying hold of

him. "Come!—come along with us, my boy, and we'll show you a little of life, — plenty of wine, and lots of pretty girls."

"Indeed you must excuse me, Ancell," rejoined Ten-thousand. "I passed my word not to stay beyond my leave; and I am sure you wouldn't wish me to break it."

A general laugh followed this declaration; and Blocks had the mortification to hear himself styled "green-horn," — "Methodist parson," — "gulpin,"— "flat,"— and a few other such contemptuous epithets.

"Why, you're not serious, Blocks!" exclaimed Mullion. "Who the devil's to know whether you're aboard or not? Parker will never split. At all events, come and have a glass of wine with us; and then we'll have one round at the shops."

"What shops?" asked the midshipman. "I do not want to buy anything."

Another burst of laughter excited our hero's irritability; but seeing that some of them were rather inebriated, he forbore manifesting anything like resentment.

"Were you ever at the theatre, Blocks?" inquired Ancell, who was the most collected of the party. "We're all bound there; you'd better join us."

"I never saw a play performed," rejoined Ten-thousand; "though I've often wished to see it."

"Never *saw* a play! What a Johnny Raw you must be!" exclaimed a rather dandified *young gentleman.* — "Why, do you think we go to see the nonsense on the stage?"

"Perhaps you consider your own nonsense of superior quality," answered our hero somewhat tartly.

"D— me, sir! do you mean that as an insult?" demanded the other, strutting up and looking Blocks fiercely in the face.

"It is not my custom to give offence," returned Ten-thousand; "nor am I very patient in receiving it."

"Oh, if you didn't mean it personal, that's another thing," replied the dandy, turning quietly away.

"Come let's have no quarrelling," said Ancell. "Blocks was not personal, but *general* in his hit; though you deserved it, Sparkes, and something with it, for calling him a Johnny Raw. However, let us have a glass of wine together, and drown animosity."

It was not quite dark, and Ten-thousand saw no objections to complying with their request. They were soon seated in a com-

fortable room by themselves; the wine was brought in, and eagerly swallowed by those who already had had too much of it.

"You will go with us to the play, Blocks," said Ancell. "We shall have lots of sport; and the captain 's away to dine with the admiral."

"Not to-night, Ancell," replied Blocks firmly, though there was a strong temptation to comply, which was strengthened by the intoxicating nature of the wine he had drunk. "Little Parker will be expecting me, and I should not like to disappoint him."

"Oh, never mind the youngster," urged Mullion; "it will keep him out of mischief. I dare say he 's as proud as a dog with two tails to-day at having charge of the craft."

"If I had leave," said Blocks, "I should feel great pleasure in accompanying you."

"Leave!" shouted the whole. "What, do you think we 're on leave, then? Not a bit of it!—we 're all our own masters—that is, prize-masters, and so we 've dined together, and now we're going to have a cruise."

"But won't the captain be angry, Ancell?" asked Blocks somewhat seriously.

"How is he to know anything about it?"

answered Mullion. "Surely you don't mean to turn informer!"

"You do me great injustice by the suspicion, Mullion," returned Blocks, "and you confirm me in my determination to go aboard."

"Oh, just as you please, my boy," uttered the other. "By-and-by you'll be held up as an example to the middies of the fleet."

"He should be hung up for a pattern — like the reefer's coat in the admiral's office, which everybody looks at, but nobody cuts out by," uttered one of the party.

"Really, gentlemen, I am not aware that there has been anything offensive to you, either in my manners or my conduct," exclaimed Ten-thousand; "and, therefore, why you use the language that you do, unless it is congenial with your usual habits, I am at a loss to conjecture."

"Oh! — hum! — haugh!" said the dandy, raising a gold-set quizzing-glass to his eye, and surveying our hero; "so you are," drawling out the words, "Mr. Ten-thousand Topsail-sheet Blocks, eh? picked up at sea, like a marine adrift upon a main-hatch grating."

The colour flushed into the face of the youth

as he heard this allusion to his preservation, — he rose steadily from his chair — caught the dandy by the collar, gave him a rather rough shaking. "And you, sir, by name Sparkes, had no other birth-place than a tinder-box or an armourer's anvil. Then, sir, some hammering must have been required to bring you into light; and if you don't keep a bridle on your tongue, you shall get hammered again. Pray, sir," and he threw him from him, "do you consider *that* personal."

"Serve you right, *Sparkes!*" shouted Ancell to the crest-fallen dandy. "I'm glad you've met with your *match*, anyhow; — you see his *brimstone* caught *fire* in an instant."

A general confusion ensued, — most of the party rallying round Sparkes, whilst two or three, with Ancell, congratulated our hero on his displaying so proper a spirit. The foppish young man who had caused the affray was fully sensible, from the manner in which Blocks had held him in his grasp, that he would be but little more than a child in his hands; but then boxing was beneath the rank of officers, and therefore one of the party was sent to demand an apology, and in case of refusal to give a formal challenge.

The Sparkites and the Blockites had sepa-

rated to different parts of the room, and much as Ten-thousand was desirous of getting away to his charge, yet he thought there would be something pusillanimous in quitting at that moment.

"Mr. Sparkes has sent me, Mr. Blocks, to demand an apology," said the emissary.

"An apology, for what?" coolly demanded the person addressed.

The youngster hesitated, — scratched his head, — tried to look big. "Why, sir, — for —for having — for having — "

"For having what?" asked Blocks, laughing at the ridiculous figure of the ambassador.

"Nay, d— it! I don't know exactly what it is for," said the other. "All I know is, I was sent to demand an apology; and if you wouldn't give it, to challenge you."

"Return then, and get better *instructed*," said Ten-thousand, renewing his laughter.

"Get better instructed! What do you mean by that?" demanded the other fiercely. "I have had a better schooling than ever fell to your lot, I 'll swear, and will work a day's work with you any hour you please."

"I made no allusion to your education, nor the benefit you may have derived from it," an-

swered Blocks. " Indeed, no one who sees you at this moment can doubt your proficiency. But ——"

" Out o' that, you bog-trotter!" shouted a young Irish Blockite, giving the plenipo a set in the stern with his foot. Go to Mr. Sparkes, and tell him to come here with himself, and hand over his message by word o' mouth.—An apology! Och! by the powers, but it should be in the shape of a big *blow* that ud put Mr. Sparkes in a *flame*."

The young Sparkite returned to his party, who were quite indignant and uttered many cruel things in reference to the circumstances in which Blocks was placed; but, though by far the strongest (nearly three to one) in numerical force — yet Ancell, Paddy Flynn, and Mullion (who at first joined the Sparkites, but afterwards came over to his shipmates), and Blocks, with two others, were not customers to be trifled with, and no one was hardy enough to renew the hostile demonstration.

" It's split, then, we are," said Paddy Flynn, walking up to the fireplace and embracing the poker, which he carried to and laid upon the table; then, seating himself and filling his glass, he turned to the Blockites. " Och! be sated, gentlemen, with all the plea-

sure in life, and it's myself will be happy to see yez. Here am I, Paddy Flynn, prize-master of the mahogany, anyhow, and sorrow the sowl shall bring his —— to an anchor without lave and license from Kennedy here," and he lifted the poker. "Sit down, gentlemen, — sit down, and make yer lives happy. Och! by the powers, apology is it you mane? By me conscience, Blocks, but you was right! Divel a thing but the son of a tindther-box is he! Apology? — it's the Connaught way of settling a row; — knock a man down, and then kick him for falling."

The Blockites seated themselves at the table, and some of the other party seized their glasses, intending to share in the wine: but a rap of the knuckles from the poker made them drop the brittle material, that crashed upon the floor —and brought in the waiter.

"Did you ring, gentlemen?"

"No, but the glasses did," replied Paddy, laughing. "The officers have been after amusing themselves to thry how hard the craturs were; and, by the powers, they've knocked 'em into smithereens."

"It was you, Flynn, that did it with the poker!" exclaimed several.

"What!" said the rough Hibernian, rising

up; and giving Kennedy a twist, shillelagh fashion over his head, he uttered the wild Irish cry, 'Whaug! hooroosh!' who dare say I did it, or impache me veracity?" Not a tongue moved, — no Sparkite was bold enough to resist Paddy's appeal, and most of them knew the way of the boy. Flynn stood looking ludicrously stern at his opponents, and then addressing the attendant. "You see, waither they own the soft impachement — put it down in their bill, Sparkes debtor to Morreen seven empty wine-glasses with nothing in 'em; — and pray bring another room for the gentlemen; for, by the sowl o' me, they 're heartily tired of our company;" he laid his hand on the poker and gave them a significant look—"ain't you, my fine fellows?" A ready assent was given. "You see, waither, you must bring 'em up another room. Come, gentlemen, charge your glasses — the waither 'ell charge theirs — and I 'll give you a toast, 'Paddy Flynn's *striking* argument, — vide Dr. Kennedy:' och! but it *bates* Bannacher!"

The toast was drunk with applause by the Blockites, and the wine circulated so freely that Ten-thousand incautiously suffered himself to be led on till it began to have a very sensible effect upon his usual sobriety of man-

ner. The Sparkites left the room; and young Blocks had discretion enough to propose that they should all accompany him on board the Kingston, where he could treat them to some excellent Madeira. This was assented to, provided they had one cruise just to show the Sparkites that they had no intention of running away; and having paid the bill, forth they sallied into the street, and shortly afterwards stopped at the door of a rather genteel-looking house.

"Who lives here?" inquired Blocks, on whom the fresh air began to operate. "Where's Mr. Flynn?— I 'll stick close to Mr. Flynn. — But what are you going to do here?"

"Here!" said Paddy, "at this house? — Why, then, by the powers, it 's an ould aunt o' mine as lives here; and, by me sowl, as nate little craturs as I 've got for cousins! — och! the darlints!"

The door was opened, and in they rushed to a large, richly but tawdrily-furnished room, where indeed were some of the most lovely of Eve's fair daughters, dressed in virgin white, and by no means delicate in displaying charms that would have fired the icy passions of an anchorite. Paddy's aunt could not have weighed less than three-and-twenty stone; and she

was seated in an easy arm-chair, her head apparently resting upon three or four tiers of chins, and the lower part of her bust, like a breast of veal, almost entirely exposed to public gaze. Her dress was in the extreme of fashion and of rich materials; her fingers, each as big as a baby's leg, displayed sparkling gems, set in gold hoops that might have served for anchor-rings; the bobs in her ears were a trifle smaller than the clapper of a line-of-battle ship's bell; and so great was the labour for this mountain of flesh to move without leverage, that even when breathing her rising and setting were performed with much difficulty, and she wheezed like a blacksmith's bellows with a hole in the leather. The room was well lighted up and strongly perfumed; though all the spices of Araby could not keep down the smell of that villanous compound, gin.

Young Blocks was greatly abashed at the sight of such fine ladies, and much as his brain whirled, he yet had sense enough to feel the impropriety of appearing before females in a state of intoxication — particularly the cousins of his friend Mr. Flynn, who had so generously taken his part that very evening. At first, therefore, he loitered at the door; but the voice of the aunt, like the roar of an elephant, arous-

ed him, as she bellowed "Come in, reefer! don't stand hanging a —— there!" Ten-thousand was struck into a heap! What language for the aunt of a naval officer! But he entered and made his best bow.

"Well, Paddy, my darling!" exclaimed one of the young ladies, who Ten thought looked blooming with health, though she certainly laboured under some malady that prevented her preserving the perpendicular,— "Well, Paddy, how are you off for dumps?"

How kind of his cousin to take so much interest in his welfare, thought Blocks, and then to call him by the endearing name of Darling! But where was Ancell and Mullion? Ten looked round, and, to his great astonishment, each had got one of Flynn's cousins upon his knee, and they were exchanging kisses like fury. Never had Blocks blushed so much before in all his life,— he felt indignant, and was ready to resent the insult offered to his friend. One of the cousins approached Ten-thousand,— she was a pretty little girl, with laughing blue eyes and delicately fair complexion —and Ten's heart warmed towards her, she looked so engagingly mild and affectionate. But what was his surprise when she threw her arms round his neck, and, in a voice as hoarse as a

boatswain's-mate, called him "her dear little reefer," whilst at the same time she essayed to press her lips to his!—Faugh! there was no mistaking the effluvia of that breath; — Paddy Flynn's pretty cousin drank — rum.

At this moment in burst the Sparkites — presumptuous rascals, to invade the sanctity of private life, and evince their pitiful spite by attacking the domicile of Mr. Flynn's aunt! Away dashed Paddy at the poker; but the opposition were flushed with new wine and armed with knob-sticks, and one of them got hold of Paddy's argument before he could seize it, and brandished it about, to the terror of the young ladies and the indignation of the aunt, who poured forth such a torrent of oaths that Blocks was stupified with horror, from which state he was aroused by a heavy blow on the neck, that made him reel, (he staggered before,) and, turning round, he saw his adversary Sparkes about to repeat the blow. In an instant Blocks made a clever hit with his fist at his opponent's stomach, that drove him slap into the chest of the aunt, who, catching him by the hair, held him fast and pummelled him, or rather sledge-hammered him, without mercy. A general row was the result: two of the young ladies — the handsome cousins —

were capsized, and showed the prettiest feet and ankles in the world, besides — but Ten-thousand shut his eyes.

" Arrah ! you sowls, cut and run !" shouted Paddy, knocking down a Sparkite ; and catching our hero by the arm, he dragged him towards the door.

" What ! leave your aunt and cousins in trouble ? " said Ten-thousand, shocked at his irreverent conduct.

" Och ! the divel run a hunting round the rim of the moon with the whole boiling of 'em !" replied Paddy. " By the powers ! make sail out o' this — your shipmates are off — och, bother ! start, you spalpeen, don't you hear the rattles ?—and see, there comes the watch !"

Several persons were indistinctly seen coming along the street, and the noise of the rattles answering each other with fraternal regard, Blocks thought it time to be moving. His companion, however, would not let him run, but, linking him by the arm, exclaimed, " Aisy, boy, aisy ! the inemy ull be down upon us this course, and they mustn't see us running away, anyhow : take it aisy, me darlin !" They walked leisurely on, and Ten-thousand soon became sensible of the value of this advice when at the corner of the street

they saw Ancell and Mullion in the hands of three or four stout watchmen, who still kept springing their rattles, either to terrify their prisoners, or also to keep up their own courage.

"Arrah! what 's the row about here?" said Paddy, going boldly up to the guardians of the night. "One ud think, when there 's murther going on, you wouldn't be wasting your time stopping people on the king's highway."

"These are our shipmates," said Ancell; "and they can tell you ——"

"Och, bother!" shouted Paddy, addressing Ancell; "and pray, who the divel may you be that claims relationship to meself, in the regard o' being shipmates? Sorrow the know I know of him at all, watchman."

"Not know me!" screamed Ancell, whilst Blocks was struck with greater wonder at Paddy's sudden forgetfulness; —"not know me and Mullion?"

"The divel a bit!" exclaimed Flynn. "But you seem to be officers — what got you in limbo?"

"Vy, 'cause they were running—and you must go with them too, my sparks," said one of the men, approaching him.

"And what ud we go with *you* for?" asked Paddy; "because we were walking? Hands off! By the powers! but I 'll report you to-morrow for neglecting your duty." A distant call of the rattles was heard. "There, you tieves o' the world!—barring ye 're watchmen,—don't you hear that signal to form close order? Och! but there 's murther going on there, at ould Mother Damnable's."

"If you 've nothing to fear, you 'll have no objection to go back with us, gentlemen," said a watchman who seemed to be more sensible than the rest.

"Not a taste in the world of objection," returned Paddy; "we 'll go with all the pleasure in life. My friend and I harde the skreeking as we came by; and it 's 'Kilt I am!' skreeks one, and it 's 'Kilt I am!' skreeks another; and, 'Blood and ouns,' says I, 'but it 's best to be out o' this, any way.'"

All Paddy's eloquence, however, was of no avail; back they were marched to the scene of contention, for it would have been madness to have offered opposition to several stout men, well armed, who expected to make something handsome by the affray. On re-entering the house, or rather getting within the doorway, —for they were not permitted to go further,—

Blocks saw Flynn's aunt (whose real character he now became awake to) lying like a mountain of whale-blubber on the floor; and by her side, *hors de combat* and crushed by the weight of her hand, was the dandified Sparkes. A battle royal was still going on amongst the junior middies and the ladies, and the carpet glistened as with a thousand gems from the fragments of a handsome looking glass that had been shattered to pieces: beads and broken combs, cocked-hats crushed in and tails of coats dissevered, shreds of muslin and pieces of silk, were scattered about; scratched faces and bloody noses gave a profusion of the vital current, to fill up the horrible in the sanguinary contest.

"By the sowl o' me!" said Paddy Flynn, "but they 're a disgrace to the sarvice; and all of 'em plenty o' money to spend. There 's me Lord Leatherlungs," pointing to Sparkes; "and that 's Sir John Nighthead," directing attention to another. "By the powers, watchmen, but they 'll be a Plate fleet to you in the way of tip. Here," slipping a seven-shilling bit into one of their hands, "it 's honest fellows ye all are, I 'll engage!—take the whole shole of 'em away to the lock-up—they 've been paid prize-money to-day."

This seasonable intimation to the watchmen had its due effect; his lordship and Sir John were taken into custody on the charge of the ladies—counter charges were made, and as some serious hurts had been given, the whole bevy, except the walrus of a landlady, were carried off to durance vile, whilst Blocks and his party took the way to the quay in order to return on board. But it was now past midnight; yet still Blocks determined to accomplish his object by some means or other, and Paddy, who smacked his lips at the thoughts of the Madeira, declared himself ready to bear him company. Ancell and Mullion urged many objections, but at length acquiesced; a small boat was forced from her moorings, a pair of loose paddles was borrowed from another, and the whole party, six in number, after encountering a few difficulties, repaired with our hero on board the Kingston. Well was it for Ten-thousand that he returned: for during his absence orders had been given to remove the West-Indiaman at daylight the following morning, preparatory to her being delivered up to the proper owners; and had Blocks remained away all night, it must have been detected, and most probably he would have fallen into disgrace.

Little Parker rejoiced to see his young protector: he had walked the deck nearly the whole of the first watch to look out for him, and only a few minutes before his arrival had stretched himself on the lockers abaft to sleep.

"An' you never fought a jewel, my boy?" said Paddy as they sat over the Madeira and sea-cake.

"Fought a jewel? no," replied our hero, who was not yet recovered from the effects of his potations, and was induced to keep the others company over their wine. "What do you mean by fighting a jewel?"

"Och! then it 's meself as is bothered about you, anyhow," said Paddy, "in the regard o' your not knowing what is meant by a jewel."

"Flynn means a duel," said Ancell: "but he has not yet completed his English education, and therefore still adheres to his foreign tongue."

"Be aisy, Ancell,—be aisy!" returned Flynn. "Didn't I get you nicely out o' throuble to-night,—tell me that? now."

"Yes, you were certainly a very admirable friend to deny all knowledge of us," responded Mullion. "It was what I call firing a broadside into a sinking ship."

"Och! an' warn't it the making of you?" returned Paddy. "Didn't the watchmen let you slip your cables quietly, when, if I'd ouned you, it 's long odds but we 'd all now been in the lock-up, instead of drinking Madeira. But I 've a great regard for you, Mr. Blocks, and if you never fought a jewel, it 's meself that ull give you some wholesome advice about it, seeing as I come from the fighting Flynns of Ballymacwhackem. There 's my father—'faith! but he 's the broth of a boy for snuffing a pistol with a candle at ten paces——"

"Snuff a pistol with a candle?" shouted Ancell, amidst the laughter of the rest; "that would indeed be a grand achievement — it would be as bad as putting the match to the muzzle of a gun instead of the touch-hole."

"It 's snuff a candle with a pistol, I mane," explained Flynn; "and sure it was my ould father, Major Dilberry O'Flynn, that ud do that thing. I onest remember his taking a bit o' practice before breakfast, and 'Stay at home, Pat,' says he, 'an' don't be bothering after me this morning, seeing as I 'm going to shoot circular, and may chance to hit them as I shouldn't like to hurt.' The divel a bit of 'stay at home' was in me: so I just tracked him across the fields, and crept through the

gaps — sorrow a few of them either—just to give the cattle a taste of the spring corn, and away over a bog, till he got to a nice snug place in a wood: it was cleared of the trees, and made a pretty round circus of an amphitheatre, where Natur was scene-painter as well as scene-shifter, and one of the actors was Major Dilberry O'Flynn. By the powers! but it 's meself as stowed away in the big bush clane out of sight, where nobody could see me. But, presently, rattle comes a shot over my head, and 'It won't do,' says the major. Then he tried another and another, till at last he got a good tree for a mark, and then he rubs his pistols, and sits down upon the sod whistling 'Croppies, lie down,' like a whole shole of fifers. 'And what ull he be after now?' thinks I, seeing as he didn't move, barring the whistling, for nearly an hour, and I began to get hungry. Well, up comes an ould skipper in the navy, one Captain Fairfax O'Grady, ounly they called him Fiery-face, and 'The top o' the morning to you, major!' says he. 'The same to yourself, Captain O'Grady,' says my father; 'you see I 'm on the ground first.'—'It 's shooting for a wager they 'll be,' thinks I.—'All right and proper, major,' says Captain O'Grady;

'is your hand steady this morning?'—'It's odds again that,' thinks I, seeing as he'd drank his four bottles of port the day before after dinner.—'As steady as the pope,' says my father; 'a pint of brandy is a capital thing to strengthen the nerves. That's a pretty tree, Captain O'Grady,—a fine direction for the eye; and a second is bound to do the best for his principal, the same as a lawyer for his client though he may be a thief.'—'All just and true,' says Captain O'Grady.—'And what the divel ull they be at next?' thinks I, as I squatted down in the bush, longing for my breakfast, and wishing meself out of it.—'There's no thrembling or quakering in the arm, major, I hope?' says the captain.—'The divel a bit,' says my father; 'perhaps you'd like to stand up, just for a thrial of practice, captain, to get our hands in afore they come: we can take twenty paces, and I'll bet you five guineas to one, I hit you twice out of three times wherever you like to name. Will you thry, just for pastime, captain?'—'No, major, no!' says the skipper; 'there's no occasion in life—I know your quality as a marksman, seeing as I've had a taste of it.' And indeed he had; for one night, when they'd quarrelled, the major had allowed him to have

two shots for one in the dining-room, (for my father had always a pistol laid on each side of his plate, along with the carving-knife and fork and the gravy-ladles,) and Captain Fiery-face O'Grady was carried to bed with enough lead in his hip to make mustard-spoons for a midshipman's mess. 'There 's no occasion in life,' says the captain.—'Why don't they fix their mark,' says my thoughts to meself, 'and have done with it, so that we may go back to breakfast?' Well, just then, up comes two more, and 'Maybe it isn't a grand match,' thinks I; so I heard them measuring the ground, ounly ten paces, and 'Gentlemen, are you ready?' says Captain O'Grady. So I took a bold peep out of the bush, and there stood my father, the major, forenent Sir Thaddeus O'Connor, a raal bullet-splitter upon a razure; and they looked just as cool and good-natur'd as a brace of griffins.—'It 's a jewel, by the hookey!' thinks I, 'a right arnest jewel, I 'll be seeing of; and if Sir Thaddeus hits Major Dilberry O'Flynn, maybe I won't have a pop at him meself!' thinks I again, only I never said nothing, because it wouldn't have been civil; but I pulls out my own pistol and cocks it. But the major had got Sir Thaddy in a line with the tree, and 'It 's all up with you

now,' thinks I.—' Where shall I hit you, Sir Thaddy?' says my father, as pleasant spoken as a priest at offering-time.—' In the head or the heart, where I mane to hit you,' says Sir Thaddeus.—' By the gridiron of St. Antony! but not so bad as that,' answers the major; ' it ud be cruel and onfriendly. Now, I 'll just plant a seed in your pistol-hand, if you 'll be kind enough to allow me.'—' I 'll bet you ten pound to two upon that,' says O'Connor's second, one Mr. Terence Mahoney, a great sporting character in the county.—' Say guineas,' says my father, ' and I 'll take you.'—' Done!' shouts Mr. Terence: ' and now, gentlemen, you 're to snap the triggers by signal.'—' Are you agreed, Sir Thaddeus O'Connor?' asked my father.—' Fire and be d— !'—bellows Sir Thaddy, and both pistols went off with one report—down dropped the O'Connor in the thick of the smoke, whilst the major stood up as straight and as stiff as a marine at drill; and ' I 'll throuble you for ten guineas, Mr. Terence Mahoney,' says he.—' You 've lost!' says Mahoney.—' I 've won!' says my father.—' You 've hit him in the head,' says Mahoney, as he raised up Sir Thaddy.—' But I hit him in the hand first,' says my father: ' as for the head, it was all

his own fault, for houlding the pistol so high.' And, sure enough, so it was.—'All 's one for that,' says Terence; 'you 've lost your bet.'—'The divel a bit!' says the major: 'but if you don't feel it convanient to acknowledge the debt, take up t'other pistol, my sowl! and I 'll give you a receipt in full under my own hand.'—'Done!' says Terence: bang went the pistols, and Mr. Mahoney embraced his mother—the major staggered, but didn't fall, and I jumped out and ran to him. 'You divel's imp! what are you doing here?' says he.—'It 's to see the jewel,' says I; 'and now we'll go home to breakfast.' Well, Sir Thaddeus O'Connor was only stunned a bit, for the ball had just grazed his head down to the bare scull; and Mr. Terence Mahoney jumped up again with a ball in the small of his leg: 'You 've kilt me, major,' says he, 'it 's down here; but I 've saved my ten guineas, anyhow.'—'A mighty dear bargain I 've made!' says my father, 'ten guineas for shooting a *calf;* but are you satisfied?' They all expressed their satisfaction. 'Then come to the castle to breakfast, and the doctor and a full bottle will soon make matters up.' So they all agreed, and away we started. 'What did you fight about, father?' says I. 'Ask some of the

others,' answers he, 'for I can't for the life of me recollect.' So I asked the others; but none of them remembered what it was, only that there was a dispute and a challenge. When we got to Castle Flynn, the doctor was in readiness, and so he dresses the hand, the head, and the leg. 'And now,' says my father, 'I 'll just throuble you, doctor, to visit a patient as I 've got in the house.' And 'Who the divel will that be?' thinks I. So as they went out, I stales after them into the major's own room—and 'Where 's the patient?' asks the doctor. 'Whisht, whisht, you sowl!' says my father, pulling off his coat, and stripping his shirt-sleeve right to the shoulder; 'just take me out this pistol-ball,' says he, showing the wound in the fleshy part of his arm: 'it was O'Connor that put it there; but I said nothing, that he mightn't crack of his firing. Dextricate it, doctor dear, and never spake sorrow the word about it.' The doctor did as he was bid—the ball was taken out—and a jovial day they had of it afterwards, and another jewel in the evening in the long gallery; but no harm was done, beyont an eye knocked through the head of one of my ancestors that hung against the wall, and an ould lamp shattered to pieces. That day I larned

one thing, and I'll tell it you—always in a jewel get your antagonist behind a tree." A general laugh followed this advice, and Paddy immediately corrected himself: "It 's get a tree behind your antagonist, I mane, to make sure of your mark. I 'll engage there 's nothing like a tree."

"But suppose the challenge should be given where there are no trees," said Mullion; "what would you do then?"

"I wouldn't fight till I 'd come to one," says Paddy with the utmost gravity.

"But on board and out at sea," said Ancell, "where there 's no possibility of making an excuse?"

"An excuse is it you mane? Och! then there 's no use in it in life," answered Paddy, "but fight it out; and if you can't do anything else, why, take the cross-tree."

CHAPTER VI.

All on a sudden, darken'd are the skies,
The lamp of heaven obscured, the winds do rise,
Waves swell like mountains.

FLAVELL.

IN a few days after the events recorded in last chapter, the Scratchee received all her officers and men from the prizes, and once more stood out to sea with a light breeze, intending to run over towards Cape Barfleur. At daylight the next morning, the flashes of guns and their thundering reports proclaimed that a severe action had commenced in-shore, and by the aid of glasses they discovered it was between two large frigates apparently well matched. Captain Yorick made all sail; but when within a couple of leagues of the combatants, the wind utterly died away, and they lay perfectly becalmed. For upwards of an hour did they continue in this tantalizing condition, and Yorick stamped, raved, prayed, and swore in his best style, till a light air sprang up, and

the Scratchee once more moved through the water: but the affair was over before she got up, and the national frigate Réunion was in possession of his majesty's frigate the Crescent, Captain Saumarez, after a hard engagement of two hours and ten minutes, during which time they were so completely enveloped in smoke that none of their manœuvres could be distinctly seen from the eight-and-twenty.

This was a gallantly-fought action, and, to the astonishment of every one, the Crescent had not a single man touched or injured by the enemy's shot, whilst the Réunion suffered most severely by the fire of her antagonist, having about forty officers, seamen, and marines killed, and sixty severely and slightly wounded. Here then the Scratchee came in for more prize-money, the French frigate being purchased by the government and added to the British navy. Captain Yorick having accompanied the Crescent and her prize across the Channel, stood away to the westward, intending to resume his station in the bay; but the light winds retarded his progress, and on the third day, when the breeze freshened, a squadron of five ships hove in sight, which were supposed to be the roving cruisers under Sir J. Warren; but on a nearer approach the private signal remained unanswer-

ed, and their character became well known. The Scratchee stood from them and showed her colours; the ships of the squadron hoisted English ensigns, but the cut and make of their sails was French, and a general chase commenced after the eight-and-twenty. The French frigates were each heavier than the Scratchee, and Captain Yorick subsequently came to learn that the squadron consisted of the Carmagnole, forty guns,—the Uranie, forty guns,—the Résolue, thirty-six,—the Semillante, thirty-six, and the Espiègle corvette, (all afterwards taken by the British, the latter by the Nymphe and Scratchee together in the following month.) These ships carried every stitch of canvass to come up with Yorick, pursuing him close in-shore, but happily he escaped into Falmouth, and information was immediately forwarded to Lord Howe, then lying with the English fleet in Torbay.

Twelve months rolled rapidly away, and young Blocks, for the short time he had been at sea, had not only seen much stirring service of almost every kind, but he had also acquired considerable proficiency in the practical part of a seaman's duty. The success of the frigate continued unabated, and the young midshipman's share of prize-money did not amount to

less than 800*l.* which was safely deposited under the charge of Mr. Brief. Captain Yorick narrowly watched the youngster's progress, gave him every encouragement to persevere, was strict but kind, and employed those means that were best calculated to produce fixed principles within the mind.

It was a beautiful daybreak on a summer's morning, that the Scratchee, on her return to her station after convoying a fleet of merchantmen to the Downs, was hugging the French coast close in under Cape Lailly: the officer of the watch, Mr. Stowage, was sweeping the horizon with his glass, when suddenly his attention became fixed, and instantly afterwards as the look-out man was going aloft, and had got about half-way up the fore-rigging, he shouted, "Sail, O!"

"'Tis well you have unplugged your daylights," said the master in reply to the man, and still keeping his eye steadily directed towards the object. "A sail it is indeed," he muttered to himself, "for there's canvass aloft; but as for the craft that carries it, why then I'm thinking it's just no more than Westminster Hall put into commission, and come out to give the lawyers a cruise. What do you make of her, quartermaster?"

"Why, sir, she looms again' the sky somut like the marine-barracks adrift," responded the man, who from age and service was a sort of privileged talker. "At all events, she 's not—"

"A parish-church," interrupted the master, cutting his harangue short with some degree of petulance; "I never asked you what she is not." Then turning to Blocks, who was using his glass at a respectful distance and wondering what the dark mass could be, he added, "Look out, young gentleman; there 's more prize-money. Yon 's a gin-tank afloat, but, I suspexts, has shifted her cargo and got somut better for us."

"Do they smuggle in such immense unwieldy vessels as that, sir?" inquired Blocks, who mistook the old man's meaning.

"No, no, boy," returned the veteran, "she 's a reglar Dutch Ingeeman, and, from the way she 's standing, is trying for a French port." Then turning to the helmsman, "Keep her away, boy; bend on the Crappo colours abaft. And, young gentleman, rouse the watch, and see all clear for making sail."

The master went below to inform the captain, who in a few minutes afterwards made his appearance on deck. He looked at the stranger,

and then hailing aloft, inquired "whether any other vessel was in sight?"

"Yes, sir," replied the man on the foretop-sail-yard, "there are two luggers right in under the land."

"The Dutchman has altered his course, sir," said the master, "and has bore up as if for our own coast."

"We 'll make short work of him presently, Mr. Stowage," responded the captain, as he earnestly scrutinised the luggers, who were carrying on about four miles distant, making a clear run for St. Valery en Caux. "It would be a hopeless task to chase those ——," he observed, "and now for Mynheer. Forud there! send a piece of cold iron into that elephant haystack."

The order was promptly obeyed; the shot struck the chase, and instantly she hauled to the wind, and laid her maintopsail to the mast. A very short time brought the frigate alongside, when the stranger proved to be a Dutch East Indiaman, which had been picked up during the night by the two luggers then in sight.

A prize-crew was immediately mustered, for most of the Dutchmen had been removed, and Macdonald (who had for some time past refrained from his usual intemperate habits) was

placed in charge, with Blocks for his second, Yorick giving orders that they should without loss of time make the best of their way for the Downs, and subsequently for the River Thames. The old Noah's ark shovelled along tolerably well with a free wind; but scarcely had they lost sight of the frigate than it fell perfectly calm, and though they were then at least ten miles from the shore, a number of row-boats were distinctly seen pulling out towards them from Dieppe, whilst, to the deep mortification of our hero, Macdonald had not been able to resist the temptation which laid in his way, and was sinking fast into beastly intoxication. Still there was nothing to fear from the row-boats: he had fourteen good seamen and four marines belonging to the frigate, twelve Dutchmen, and ten long-twelves in each broadside, (the ship had been captured by boarding, whilst the Mynheers were smoking their pipes,) with plenty of ammunition.

"Do you think they mean to attack us, Jem?" said the young officer, addressing a worthy old friend in the quartermaster. "They pull out with a good show of determination."

"Mayhap they 'll try it on, Mr. Blocks," returned the quartermaster. "Them chaps

have plenty o' pluck for a dash, though they can't stand hard hammering. But let 'em come, sir; we 've had some pretty fair *target* practice lately, and I 'm not misdoubtful but we shall expend some on 'em."

At this moment Macdonald appeared on deck, and observing Blocks and the quartermaster in conversation, with a self-conviction which still lingered about him, as the last glimmer of reason, he suspected that he himself was the subject they were talking about. "What 's all this, Blocks?" said he rather inarticulately. "Come aft here, sir, and don't be plotting mischief amongst the people."

Blocks complied with the order, for he had no wish to irritate him; but the quartermaster, nettled at the words, promptly replied, "If nobody makes no more mischief nor him, Mr. Macdonald, there wouldn't be much harm done in that 'ere way, anyhow."

"Silence, you mutinous scoundrel!" roared Macdonald, infuriated by the liquor he had swallowed.

"I 'm no mutinous scoundrel," returned the veteran, with that degree of coolness and collectedness which generally operates on passion to stir it to extreme. "I 'm a plain sober tar as knows his duty, and does it."

The term "sober," whether intended as a hit or not, produced the same effect. "Do you mean to say I'm drunk?" demanded the master's-mate, his rage bursting all bounds. He staggered into the cabin, but in two minutes reappeared with a pistol in each hand. "Here's mutiny — mutiny!—" he exclaimed. "Who will—who dare dispute my orders?"

"No one, Macdonald," said Blocks mildly. "Come, come below, and let us have a overhaul, for—"

"Silence, you brat!" interrupted Macdonald fiercely. "I know your schemes, and by —— I'll take the law into my own hands if you disobey me. Go forud, quartermaster, and take your station on the fokesul."

The man hesitated for a minute, but, urged by Blocks's voice to obedience, he was walking away, when Macdonald shouted, "Come back here, you sir. What! you wouldn't move till Blocks spoke, eh? Now, sir, come back here, and stay aft that I may have my eye on you." The quartermaster returned, but did not touch his hat as he passed, and this was made a fresh source of irritation. "So you mean to insult me, do you? Avast, sir! by ——, I believe you're drunk."

There was something so extremely ludicrous in this charge, it had in its purport and man-

ner so much of the *vis comica*, that the seamen, who had collected near the gangways, could not refrain from laughter. The Dutchmen looked on with their accustomed gravity; whilst the Frenchmen joined in the laugh, merely for the sake of companionship in mirth. This produced a climax.

"If nobody had bull'd* the cask more nor Jem to-day, there wouldn't have been much grog drunk," mumbled the quartermaster, and the next instant a ball would have passed through his head, but for the timely intervention of Blocks, who sprang forward and struck up the muzzle of the weapon.

"For shame, for shame, Macdonald!" uttered our hero. "Give me up that pistol instantly. This is getting too serious to be trifled with."

"I don't value his crackers a tinker's ——," exclaimed the quartermaster, totally unmoved by the occurrence; "but arter sailing together so many years—"

"You must lay aside that pistol, Mac-

* When a spirit-cask was emptied, if the seamen could clandestinely get hold of it, a small quantity of water was introduced through the bung-hole, the cask bunged up and shook and rolled about till the water became grog. This was called "a bull."

donald," said Blocks, who observed that the eye of his messmate was rolling with frenzy. "Here's the enemy coming out from Dieppe, and——"

"Ay, ay, I see it all," returned the master's mate. "You've mutinied, and mean to deliver up the craft. What enemy? where is the enemy?" The quartermaster was again about to speak, but Blocks sternly insisted upon his being silent. "I see no enemy," continued the infatuated being. "Away aloft there, men, and take a reef in the topsels."

"There is not a breath of wind, Macdonald," said Blocks, who saw the impropriety of sending their own seamen aloft, whilst the Dutch and French remained below, and the row-boats were nearing them fast, though not within gun-shot. "Had we not better get a gun or two to bear upon the boats as they advance?"

"All humbug!" returned Macdonald; and then turning to the quartermaster, "Here, you, sir, hand yourself into the cabin."

"I can obey a man in his senses, Mr. Blocks," argued the petit officer, addressing our hero; "but I'm —— if I'm going abaft there with a madman merely to have an oilet-hole worked in my carcase."

Poor Blocks scarcely knew what to do. He had received many, many kindnesses from Macdonald, who when sober was as clever an officer as ever breathed. He saw no alternative but to take the command from him, but he wished to do it quietly by persuading him to turn in; and when intoxication had passed away, he was well aware that no one would more lament the impropriety of his conduct than the individual who had been guilty of it. The quartermaster had been an old shipmate of Macdonald's, and had screened him on several occasions, which led to a familiarity derogatory to the distinctions imposed by discipline: the seamen, on the other hand, knew but little of him, and only saw that their lives were at the mercy of a man literally mad drunk; —they pressed aft, therefore, partly in self-defence, and partly because the barrier had been broken down by the officer himself which ought to have kept them at a distance, — they now ranged themselves in a body on the quarter-deck.

"I thinks, Mr. Blocks," said one of them, who, though a notorious drunkard, put himself forward as spokesman,—"I thinks that for the good of the sarvice you ought to put Muster Macdonald under confinement"

"Stand back, and clear the quarter-deck," shouted Blocks with firmness and promptitude: "when I want your advice, I'll seek it."

"But we think it right to give it, sir, without axing," answered the man; "and if you don't clap him in limbo, why mayhap we may do it for you."

The words had scarcely passed his lips, when the fellow lay prostrate on the deck from a blow given by the still strong arm of the sturdy old quartermaster. "Lie there, you drunken swab!" exclaimed Jem, standing erect over his fallen shipmate. "What! did ye think I was going to stand by and hear you insult a young officer as wishes to do his duty, and will do it too. But God A'mighty has stowed a commodity in his heart which never formed any part of your cargo, you lubber!—and that's humanity. *You* talk of clapping a man in limbo?" and he spurned the fellow away from him with his foot.

The man rose up and cried out, "I say, shipmates, will you stand treatment like this? If you do, then you're a pack of lubberly cowards!"

A general laugh followed this appeal.

"What treatment, Joe? — you 've had it all

to your own cheek, — it warn't sarved out among us," was the response; and the crest-fallen advocate sneaked away.

"Men," said Blocks, taking advantage of the change in the position of affairs, "it is true that I am young and but inexperienced; yet I know my duty, and cannot want for efficient support whilst you do yours. As for my poor messmate,"—his voice faltered with emotion, for recollections rushed across his mind, — the generous feelings of those whom he addressed were more forcibly touched than by any power of language, and a simultaneous cheer burst forth from the worthy tars, characteristic of the Yorick school. But Macdonald, who stood steadying himself by the capstan still retaining his second pistol, on hearing the cheer, raised the weapon, pointed it at our hero, who turning sharply round, received a ball through the fleshy part of his left arm, which otherwise probably would have passed through his heart. The wretched man was immediately secured, a handkerchief was bound tightly round the wounded arm, and as the row-boats still persevered in advancing, the men went to the guns. But here another source of difficulty was presented to our hero, as on

examination it was discovered that the Frenchmen, taking advantage of the confusion upon deck, had cut nearly through the strands of every breeching, and, in some instances, (no doubt all would have been served the same had time allowed,) nails were driven down into the touch-holes. The craft, however, was as steady as a castle on a rock, and four guns were brought to bear; but the shot-lockers were empty, the Frenchmen having quietly slid the shot overboard. Still the four effective guns were loaded, and with good marksmen much might be done with a first discharge.

"Send every rascal of the privateer's-men on deck here," said Blocks; and as soon as they were mustered so that no one was missing, a rope was passed several turns round the whole of them and hove pretty taut. The marines, with their loaded firelocks, took them under charge; whilst the English seamen went to the guns, and the Dutchmen were employed in reeving new breechings and endeavouring to clear the spikes from the touch-holes. The row-boats came on without any regular order, and the first shot that was thrown from the ship struck one of the headmost of them, and tearing out two or three streaks between wind

and water, she instantly sunk. The nearest boats to her did not stay to pick up their swimming companions, so eager were they to board; but a second boat sharing the fate of the first, checked them in their progress, and they lay for a few minutes upon their oars.

"Here's another enemy a-coming, Mr. Blocks," said the quartermaster. "Them there Mynheers must secure the guns the best way they can, and skim aloft to roll up the canvass; there's a heavy squall ull be down upon us directly from the nor'-west;— not that I'm thinking it will give us anything of a lust to starboard or to port, take us which way it comes; but the cloth arn't none o' the best, and mayhap it may turn to a summer gale. Them fellows won't come nigh us again — they can read the face of the heavens in their own latitude just as well as a purser's steward surveys his mess-books, and they see there's heavier artillery nor ours priming again' 'em."

A distant flash of lightning and the bellowing of thunder verified the old man's observation, and no time was lost in endeavours to make everything snug. The row-boats had had enough of it, and were retreating from whence they came; and the Frenchmen were liberated and compelled to assist

in shortening sail. At length, down came the squall, lashing up the waters to a white foam, and spreading a dark pall over the face of the sky. The Jonge Vrow, of Amsterdam, scarcely felt its effects on her hull, but her masts trembled and quivered, and much of the gear snapped like tow: heavier and heavier grew the gale, and higher and higher rose the sea, breaking over the unwieldy craft as if she had been a half-tide rock.

"It ull be a sneezer, Mr. Blocks," said the quartermaster; "and as we are well down to looard, a range of the cables would do no harm; — I'll just go and overhaul the tier, for mayhap the Crappoes have been playing the same trick as they did upon the breechings."

The cables, however, were found perfect, and preparations made for anchoring in case of necessity. Night came on — a red-eyed, fiery, tempestuous night: — it was not the dreary, dark, and frowning gale of winter, but the might and pageantry of power, priding itself in its strength; — it was not as the sullen roar of December's storms, pouring out destruction in its habitual rage; but it was like the wild laugh of some bacchanalian tyrant, spreading devastation to make him sport.

The lumbering ship made but little headway — she went bodily to leeward, when Macdonald, having in a great measure recovered from his intemperance, resumed the command. He had but little recollection of what had transpired, and Blocks forbore to mention it whilst they were in difficulty. The master's-mate was a thorough seaman, and a good pilot; the ship had settled down into the bight near Treport, and he immediately wore her round upon the starboard-tack, keeping her a point off the wind to see if she would draw ahead; but nothing would make this mammoth move in any other direction than sideways, like a crab, and there seemed to be every probability of going ashore.

Hour after hour, as they sounded, the water got gradually shoaler,—the high land frowned above their heads, whilst its base groaned beneath the heavy breakers that dashed and foamed in hideous distortion below; — still there were the anchors, and men were stationed ready to let them go. Unhappily, however, several of the prize crew had taken advantage of the inebriation of their officer, and liquor being plentiful, they also had become intoxicated. The Frenchmen entertained no hopes of retaking the ship; but, during the confusion

that prevailed, they lowered one of the quarter-boats without its being perceived.

At this very instant a shift of wind took place to the south-west, and whilst again wearing the ship round, Blocks, who was standing in a rather exposed situation, clearing the main-brace from the davit, missed the boat. He was about to shout to Macdonald, when a sudden blow sent him flying overboard, and he fell just outside the yawl, into which several of the Frenchmen had already got. Supposing it one of their party, the alarmed youth was dragged in amongst them; but when they found he was an enemy, they were about to commit him again to the deep. This, however, was overruled; he was told to remain quiet if he valued his life; in a few minutes the other prisoners embarked, the towline was let go, and the boat soon dropped out of sight astern.

At first the Frenchmen wished to make for Treport; but the tide was out and the sea broke too heavy to attempt the beach — so they out oars to pull for Boulogne or Calais, and subsequently the latter harbour was determined upon, as they would just reach it by daylight, and in tide-time. The gale, however, came down heavier than ever, and the shift of wind had kicked up a nasty cross

sea that several times had nearly filled the boat so as to compel all hands to get to bailing.

It was whilst thus engaged off Cape Grisnez that the yawl came broadside-to; a recoiling roller from the shore met the approaching wave exactly at the spot; — the concussion nearly crushed the clumsy vessel and sent it to the bottom. Blocks could swim extremely well; but the awfulness of his situation when he rose from the dark grave of waters that had engulphed most of his companions smote fearfully upon his heart; the noise of the billows as they toppled and threw their spray high above his head — the howling of the wind as it swept over him—the roaring of the breakers, was enough to appal the boldest mind, and he who had been rescued a helpless infant from the fury of the elements, now that he was enabled to struggle for himself, quailed before it. Still he struck out, and finding his hands hit against something hard, he grasped at it, and seized one of the oars that had floated; — in a short time he possessed himself of another, and placing them under his arms, they buoyed him up with a little assistance from his feet. To render himself as light as possible, Blocks parted with his jacket and waistcoat, and subsequent-

ly, as the wash of the sea rendered his shirt an embarrassment, that also was abandoned. The water was rather warm than otherwise; but the recoil of the swell frequently tumbled him over and over, though he still held firmly by his friendly support. The wound in his arm was very painful, and the blow that knocked him overboard had stiffened his back and neck; — but, oh! how inestimable is life to one who feels and knows that he is on the verge of eternity! — the power that is actuated by animal instinct may grow weaker and weaker till it utterly fails, whilst the mind remains strong in its reason though increasing in its suffering.

Our hero's nervous system had undergone great agitation from excitement during the previous day, and the labours of the night to counteract the effects of the gale had rendered him weary; nor can it excite surprise that, now he found himself alone and desolate on the turbid waters, his spirit should be depressed or his heart dejected. But the gale subsided as the bright herald of the day gradually spread its light over the face of the heavens; and, oh! what tongue can tell—what language can describe the revival of hope in the breast of poor Blocks as he saw the dimness of night yield-

ing to the sweet influences of the early dawn! and yet how long—how very long it seemed to linger, as if in mockery at his anxious longings for help.

At length a flood of sunshine filled the air, and shortly afterwards spread its warm beams upon the waters. The breeze lulled, the waves became smooth: Ten-thousand saw the high cliffs towering above him. He was about a mile from the shore, carried rather rapidly along by a spring flood-tide. At every rise of the swell he gazed ardently and anxiously around, but no aid appeared: he beheld the white cliffs of England gloriously lighted up by the rays of the sun, but he feared his foot would never again tread on British soil. The swell and the indraught were hurrying him towards the rocky shore, on which the breakers dashed most fearfully, and he knew he had not strength to resist them. Consciousness now seemed to waver, and he clutched the oars beneath his arms as with a death-grapple; a flickering mist was spread like a dark veil before his eyes; his senses became bewildered; a pleasing delirium crept upon him; shadowy forms flitted before his visionary view; a deafening noise, like the shouts of a tumult, sounded in his ears, and he sank into slumber. Horrible

were his dreams; he might indeed exclaim with Clarence,

"Ye gods! methought what pain it was to drown."

Suddenly he awoke, but his eyes were still closed; his supporters were gone, and yet he felt the agitation of the waves; he stretched out his hands, and they fell upon a human face! "Was he then among the dead at the bottom of the sea?" He shuddered and sprang up, but a heavy blow instantly prostrated him again; he opened his eyes, and found himself in the little bed-place on the starboard-side of a small cabin, whilst the sleeper he had touched lay on the lockers by his side, and the blow was caused by his striking his head against a beam. The fact was, that just as sensibility was sinking into utter helplessness, a small cutter privateer from Boulogne was running along the coast for the North Sea, and passing close to our hero, had picked him up. Means had been used to resuscitate with success; he had been put to bed in the captain's berth, and recovered, as we have already seen.

Ten-thousand lay ruminating on his situation as he felt the little vessel dance lightly along, and heard the voices of the crew on deck. That he was in the hands of the French, he

could tell by their language, and the questions he debated in his mind were, to what cause should he attribute the peril from which they had, no doubt, rescued him, and whether he should declare himself an English officer. He had no papers—no certificates—no uniform to show, and the dread of a prison wrought terror in his heart; whilst if it were only possible to pass for a Frenchman, there were prospects of escape. He spoke the language with all the freedom and fluency of a native, and he might represent himself as of English descent, born in France. The story of the Dutchman would do, making himself one of the prisoners who had quitted her; his wound would be corroborative evidence. For the present, however, he determined to lie perfectly still; and soon afterwards a seaman descended, and aroused the sleeper, to say that "the Republican flag was flying at Ostend."

"The —— English must have left it then, and retreated?" said the awakened man; "or is it a *ruse?*"

"You had better judge for yourself," responded the first. "There is heavy firing along the coast; and if the *foutres* have fled, there will be something handsome in the way of plunder."

The individual addressed arose from the locker. Blocks heard him exclaim, "Pauvre diable!" but he kept his eyes closed, and the two immediately went on deck. For a full hour he lay in torment of mind and in pain of body. At the expiration of that time, the movements of the vessel became steady, and he was aware she was gliding along in smooth water—probably had entered Ostend. This, in fact, was the case; and Le Juliana (the name of the cutter) in a very short time was lying quietly moored at the platform.

Blocks could hear the roaring of artillery and the shouts of many voices; but they were distant, whilst near at hand all was sullen silence. There was no tread of feet upon the deck, no hum of conversation, and, unable any longer to resist curiosity, he arose and ascended the companion; but it was locked, and egress in that direction was denied. Mounting the table, he removed the skylight with as little noise as possible, but no one appeared to prevent his operations; he climbed on deck, but not a soul was to be seen. Again descending, he slipped on a pair of canvass trowsers,—he already had been supplied with a shirt; a pair of shoes, somewhat too large, were made free with; and mounting a red cap with a cockade in it over

all, he quitted the cutter, passed through the heavy barricades that had been recently erected, walked stealthily along the quay, and then boldly entered the town.

The musketry was still ringing forth their death-peals. Blocks heard the balls whistle past him, but he had no shelter to fly to; for should he return to the cutter, it was more than probable that his fate would be sealed. The wounded and dead were lying in the streets; the Republican troops, like infuriated demons, were smearing their faces with the blood of the slain; brutal intoxication heightened the ingenuity of hellish cruelty; and Ten-thousand was nearly betraying himself, on seeing a young mother, with her infant in her arms, surrounded by the monsters, and supplicating mercy on her bended knees. The baby crowed and laughed as if pleased with the *mêlée;* its looks and innocence might have softened an obdurate heart, but these devils knew no pity. One of them thrust his bayonet through the delighted child, and whilst thus impaled, he shouldered his fusee amidst the shouts of his companions. But oh that wretched mother!—she sprang upon her feet; she gazed at her writhing and yet screaming babe; her eyes seemed starting from their sockets; a rigid sternness came upon her

features; her arms were immovably outstretched, her fingers were curved and fixed, her under jaw dropped; there was a deep hollow groan,—and the woman was a corpse! But she did not instantly fall; in all the distortion of death she stood for upwards of a minute in the same attitude, and then came heavily to the ground.

So horrible a spectacle nearly maddened our hero. He had heard and read of such atrocities, and shuddered at the contemplation of man becoming a wolf to his fellow-creatures; but now the evidence was practically before his eyes—he had himself witnessed it, and rushing from the spot, he fled he knew not whither.

In one of the deserted streets, the door of a handsome house stood open, and he entered, hoping to find shelter; but, alas! the sounds of lamentation were also here. In a large apartment of which he commanded a view from an anteroom, sat a French officer writing; an orderly serjeant was at a short distance from the table: groans and sobs proceeded from the interior, but Blocks could not tell from whence, though they appeared to be the bitter wailings of females. Our hero, conjecturing that the serjeant would soon withdraw, noiselessly crept to a spacious closet in the ante-room, where he

concealed himself. He was right: the orderly received the paper and departed. The officer remained; but almost immediately afterwards nearly a dozen soldiers rushed in, and, in defiance of the officer's commands, two young ladies were dragged out by these brutes, shouting "Vive la République!—Mort aux émigrés."

"Arrêtez, arrêtez!" cried the officer, following them. "They are my sisters; I am their brother. You will not shed the blood of friends?"

"Vive la République!—Mort aux émigrés!" was the response, and the sounds grew into confusion as the party receded.

Blocks entered the room in which the officer had been sitting, and stretched upon a table in one corner lay the bloody body of an aged man. His dress was of a superior kind;—black silk knee-breeches and silk stockings of the same colour, a white satin embroidered waistcoat, and a black coat with the insignia of nobility on the left breast. His hair was silvery white, and even in death there was a look of sorrowful placidity on the features. Blocks readily read the tale. The corpse had been one of the noblesse, who with his daughters had quitted Paris at the Revolution,

leaving his son behind. The latter, either to save his patrimonial estates, or from choice or necessity, had joined the Republicans, and attained the rank of colonel in the army, under Jourdan and Pichegru. The father had been unable to retreat with the English when Lord Moira retired from Ostend, and had fallen a victim to the sanguinary forces; and now the daughters—but their fate was not yet known.

On the table at which the officer had been sitting lay a light hussar's jacket; removing which, Blocks beheld a brace of pocket-pistols, a gold watch, and a silk purse, which had been concealed under it. He found the pistols were both loaded and primed, and the purse was heavy with louis-d'ors. What should he do with them? He was destitute of money, he was without arms, and both were now before him. The deliberation was short; they were speedily secured about his person. But the watch? — if any one entered, he would certainly take it; and perhaps by doing the same himself, he might restore it to the owner. Scarcely had he appropriated the articles, when he heard approaching footsteps. To retreat to the closet was impossible; he therefore hastily crawled beneath the table on which lay the dead body, and the long side-flap descending

to the ground, entirely screened him from observation. The individual entered the apartment and groaned most heavily. Blocks cautiously peeped out, and saw the young officer sitting at the table, his face concealed by his hands, but every limb gave indication of considerable agitation. In a few minutes he arose and stood over the corpse.

"Father!" he uttered in a tone of melancholy entreaty, as if the dead could hearken to his voice,—"Father! it is Eugène that calls." He paused about the space of a minute, and then added in a deep sepulchral murmur, "He will never answer more! And I?" he suddenly ejaculated, "leagued with devils who have dishonoured those grey hairs and shed this blood—ay, my blood, for the same vital stream flows in my veins.—Father! Eugène implores you—say that you forgive me! I did it for the best, and it had your sanction. If thy blessed spirit is yet hovering over the frail clay, give some token of pardon to a distracted son." He knelt and bowed his head upon the corpse; when Blocks heard a light noiseless step enter the room, and a voice exclaimed, "C'est vrai!—my enemy is here before me."

The officer started to his feet, and would

have sprung to the other table, no doubt expecting to find his pistols, but his opponent barred the way. "What would you now, infernal fiend?" demanded he.

"You mouth it well, monsieur," responded the other. "Nay, put up your sword. It was I who taught your arm the fence; and though you've been a clever pupil, you are not yet a master. There lies my ancient foe, who drove me forth upon the world, and made me what I am. Monsieur Eugène, I will tell you a secret: it was my hand that stretched him there." And the wretch laughed.

"Monster!—villain!—murderer!" screamed Eugène, making a desperate but useless pass at his antagonist: he was instantly disarmed, and at the mercy of his enemy.

"You had better have kept your temper, Monsieur Eugène!" tauntingly exclaimed the other. "That pass was worthy of the teacher, however, and I am proud of my instruction. But you would stab your friend — the friend who has made you a marquis;—though, I forgot all titles were abolished; but, at all events, there are the estates, young man. It would sound badly at the Convention, that Monsieur Du Fay had attempted to assassinate a compatriot, and his equal in rank:—yes, the poor

serjeant of chasseurs is now a colonel; and he who was spurned from the chateau for loving your sister Pauline, has now the power of life and death in his hands. That pass, however, was well made, and ——"

"What is your object in seeking me here?" inquired the officer who had been styled Du Fay: "is it to exult over your murdered victim, once your benefactor and friend? Remember, sir, I am not without influence—my services demand ——"

"Tush—folly, man!" returned the other, laughing: "you—I—the whole army are but tools—mere instruments in the hands of one whom I could name; nay, why should I fear to name him?—it is Robespierre. He needs our swords; but were they laid aside, he would be just as likely to require our heads, and roll them on the scaffold. I am here to serve you, and to save your sisters. Are you ready to sanction my union with Pauline?"

"Horrible audacity!" exclaimed Du Fay; "what! marry the daughter, with the blood of the father still red upon your hands? Think you Pauline is so utterly lost to feeling and to honour?"—An involuntary groan, arising from exhaustion and pain, issued from poor Blocks: it was heard by the other parties.

"Hark!" exclaimed Eugène, "the very dead protests against it;" and he returned to the side of the corpse.

"Either she is mine, or dies!" said the other determinedly; "nor can all your boasted influence save her. The terrorists will have their way—the trenches are prepared—the general will spare no one."

"And I remain here idly," exclaimed Du Fay, "whilst perhaps they perish. The general wars not against women: he will, he must listen to my entreaties,—and what power can you possess superior to mine?"

Blocks heard the rustling of some paper, as the other replied, "Here is the warrant for their execution. I am commissioned to see its performance."

"Colonel Tiercelin!" returned Du Fay, his energies subdued, "can you—dare you consign my sisters to a death of outrage? Think of the chateau—think of earlier days—think—oh God! 'tis horrible to think! for the memory floats onward like the tide, filling up the after history with deeds of blood. Yet you cannot—you dare not murder the children of your benefactor."

"My benefactor?" uttered the person addressed. "Twice have you taunted me with

the term. Your father found me an exile, and I might have lived and died in humble obscurity (if my fiery nature would have permitted), but that he ascertained the royal blood was flowing in my veins. They may talk of legitimacy and the marriage contract! —tush! I am not less the son of a king for being born out of wedlock; nor will I ever forget, that whilst my unfortunate mother expired in a convent, her child was banished and abandoned to penury and want. Your father gave me shelter, brought me up, and educated me; we lived together—I dared to love your sister, and was driven from the only home I ever knew. The marquis had only *éclat* in view—he cared not for the bar sinister then, and ——"

"Hold, Tiercelin!" said Du Fay; "you well know, that it was not till you had outraged every moral feeling, and shown yourself capable of the vilest ingratitude, that you were sent from the chateau.—But I cannot stay longer here; I must seek the general."

"You do not stir from this place, Du Fay, until you have sealed the fate of Pauline," returned the other firmly. "Your rejection of my alliance shall be her death—no power on earth can save her; for if not mine, no

created being shall enjoy the woman I have loved to madness."

"By what authority, sir, do you oppose my departure?" demanded Du Fay, who sprang to the table, lifted up his jacket—the weapons were gone. "Nay, then I dare you!" he exclaimed; "I defy your sword!" and he rushed upon his merciless opponent, who received the shock as if he had been a statue of marble.

Blocks peeped out and beheld the strife. The antagonist of Du Fay was splendidly dressed, a strong muscular man, tall and stout, who hurled the young officer back into the apartment, wounded.

"I am resolved, monsieur!" exclaimed the wretch, coolly wiping and putting up his sword. "Write to Pauline your sanction to our union —she will not disregard the request of her brother, and all may yet be well. Refuse, and she—ay, you also must die! I am here the stronger of the two—you are at my disposal—and do you suppose I would suffer a babbler to talk of what has happened?—no, no!"

"Villain!" indignantly uttered Du Fay, "and can you think so meanly of my intellect as to suppose I do not penetrate your designs? My consent once in your hands, you, who have murdered the father, would

assassinate the son, to prevent its being known. Come on, thou bastard!"—he seized a chair and aimed a blow; "at least I will sell my life at hazard."

Blocks again looked out, and saw the tall officer struck heavily by the chair—his sword was immediately drawn, and in all probability Du Fay in a few minutes would have been laid by the side of his father; but Ten-thousand's finger was on the trigger of the pistol—he trembled lest he should be foiled in his aim, but, mustering all his resolution, he fired: the smoke prevented his witnessing the effect, but the cry of "Ha, treachery!" induced him to hope that it had been sure. Firmly he grasped the other pistol, the emergency of the moment steadying all his nerves—the smoke cleared, and the officer stood with his hand to his head, apparently unharmed. Du Fay had taken advantage of the firing, and rushed through the door-way: his antagonist did not follow, but staggeringly approached the table; he removed his hand, and a stream of blood gushed down his face. Blocks sprang from his concealment,—he snapped the other pistol—it missed fire, and the sword of the wounded man passed just above his shoulder; but the force of the thrust overpowered the

Colossus, — his eye became dim, his brain reeled, and he fell prostrate on the young midshipman, forcing him beneath his weight to the ground.

Expecting immediate death, and unable to extricate himself, Ten-thousand felt the giant hand of the colonel on his throat: the compression was like a vice — strangulation proceeded — life was fast fading, when the hold suddenly relaxed, a convulsive tremour shook his foe, the body sprang from the ground and then rolled over, leaving the youth at liberty. It was several minutes, however, before Blocks could take advantage of his release: when he did, he found the strong man a corpse. His first impulse was to escape; but remembering the warrant of execution, he felt the pockets of the enemy, possessed himself of every paper, and then hastened to quit the house,—but he found the door secured, and all egress that way prevented. Whilst debating in his mind what course to pursue, he heard the noise of many voices advancing, singing and shouting, and at intervals the firing of musketry. A strong iron bar upon a central pivot was affixed to the door, and this Ten-thousand succeeded in throwing across,—he also closed the bolts, and had scarcely finished, when the muzzle of a musket was

inserted in the key-hole and discharged. The lock was shattered, but it did not give way; a second and a third were fired, but still the door remained unmoved, and the plunderers, after uttering a few "sacrés," proceeded onward in their career. A large hole, however, had been perforated, through which Blocks could see into the street. The noise died away, and silence again resumed her absolute dominion—but the youth hesitated to depart; the bars and bolts had resisted the attack, and where could he be more safe? besides, he trusted to Du Fay's return, whom he determined to acquaint with his real situation, and to crave his protection. The wound in his arm was extremely troublesome, and hunger began to prey upon his stomach; he sought for food, and he found it;—to be sure, it was nothing but brown bread and hard cheese,—still it was dainty fare to the half-starved young man, who ate with appetite, and a flask of brandy recruited his spirits. Having finished his meal, he laid himself in a corner near the door, and was soon in a profound sleep, from which he was awoke by the sounds of some one trying to get in. The daylight was gone, the shades of evening had closed over, but, softly creeping to the perforation, Ten-thousand was able to distinguish Monsieur Du Fay: watching a few

moments to ascertain, and finding he was alone, the youth drew the bolts and unbarred the door.

"Who is there?" exclaimed the officer, hesitating to enter: "are the inhabitants returned? Speak, who's within?"

"The friend who rendered you such signal service to-day," answered our hero. "You have nothing now to apprehend."

"And Colonel Tiercelin?" said the other, as Ten thousand emerged from the gloom and presented himself to view.

"—Is dead!" responded Blocks.

"And you?" said the officer.

"Am the individual who fired," returned the midshipman.

Du Fay entered, and soon convinced himself of the fact. His gratitude to the young man was expressed in warm acknowledgments as he wept over the body of his murdered parent. A lingering beam of light still forced its way into the apartment, and threw a shadowy mistiness over every object. On the table was extended the corpse of the Marquis Du Fay; on the floor lay the body of his murderer: a channel of blood running for nearly two feet away from his head, and then extending into a circular pool, formed a dark coagulated mass that made the spectator shudder.

"My brave young friend," exclaimed Du Fay, "you have acted nobly — may I trespass still further on your aid? My sisters —"

"Are they safe, monsieur?" eagerly inquired Blocks.

"Thank Heaven, they are," returned the marquis.

"And released?" said Blocks.

"Yes, and released," answered Du Fay; "but they insist on returning hither to perform the last rites to our lamented parent. Have you been disturbed during my absence? — do you think that we can barricade so as to prevent intrusion?"

"You must be the best judge of probabilities from without, monsieur," returned Blocks. "The bolts and bar have resisted violent shocks to-day, and we might hold out, — but let us have fire-arms.—Mais, monsieur, the body of the colonel?"

"We must remove it," rejoined the other.

Ten-thousand remembered the closet, and thither they dragged the corpse from observation. "And now," continued the marquis, "I hasten to the prison."

"For what purpose?" demanded Blocks.

"To fetch my sisters," returned Du Fay. "The general granted my requests for their re-

lease, but I durst not bring them through an infuriated rabble, — even our own men would have massacred them, and I should have been expected to look on with satisfaction."

"This is horrible!" said Blocks: "can human nature be so utterly depraved? I now can well believe the atrocities which almost stunned the intellect to read — the bloody Robespierre, the sanguinary Danton. Men must have tigers' hearts within their breasts when the weak and the defenceless become their prey! And you, monsieur, — you too have joined them!"

"How's that?" sharply exclaimed the other; "you of the *canaille*, who are here for plunder, dare to arraign the proceedings of authority!"

"The proceedings of murderers and assassins," returned Blocks,—"men who usurp the powers of authority by setting the principles and attributes of the laws at utter defiance. — But we will not enter upon that now. I am not of the *canaille*, nor am I a mercenary plunderer."

"What are you then?" demanded Du Fay. "In these times it is necessary a man should know his compatriots."

"True, monsieur," returned Blocks, whose

spirit seemed to soar beyond his own comprehension ; " you have a specimen of your knowledge in yonder closet. But I scorn deceit ; — I am an officer, — an English naval officer, forced hither by circumstances that appear almost miraculous. I have done you some service to-day, and crave your protection in return."

" This is indeed strange !" rejoined Du Fay ; " and how am I to be convinced of this, or that you really are the individual who fired at Tiercelin ?"

" I have the death-warrant for your sisters in my possession," quietly returned Blocks.

" You have reminded me," exclaimed the marquis, — " I am now convinced. But your knowledge of the language."

" — Is the effect of education and practice," answered Ten-thousand. " You may safely trust *me*, monsieur ; but what bond have I that you will not at least surrender me as a prisoner ?"

" My word of honour, young man," returned Du Fay, — " the parole of the last scion of one of the most ancient houses in the kingdom. Oh God ! that it should have ever suffered this deep humiliation ! I go, then, — do you await my return, — the kennels

are running blood — night may relax the slaughter."

He departed, and nearly two hours elapsed before the preconcerted signal was heard announcing his return. Blocks unbarred the door, and the young marquis and his sisters entered. A light was procured, and they repaired to the scene of the conflict, to "sorrow o'er the dead."

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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